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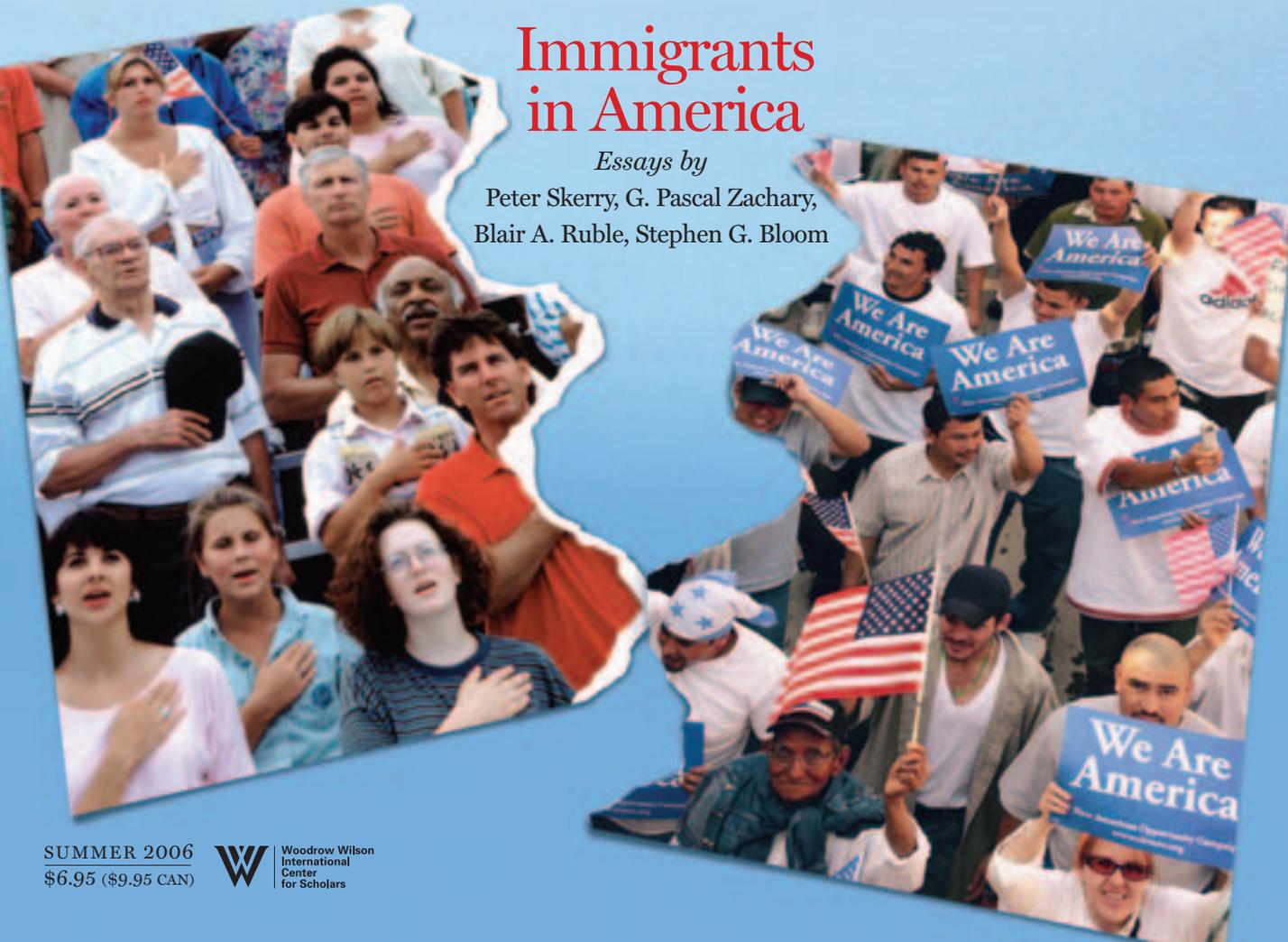
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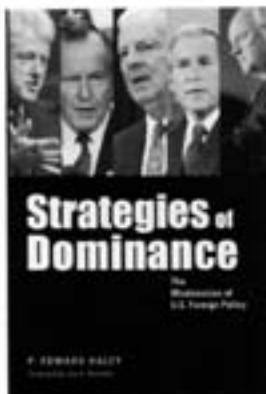
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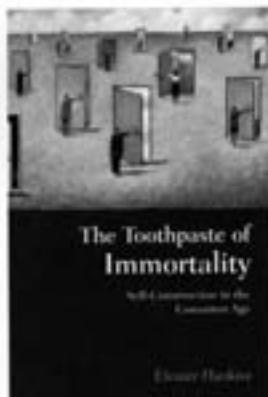
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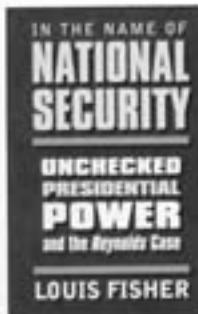
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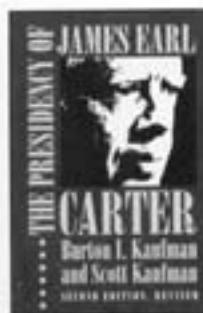
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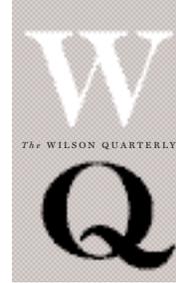
After Immigration

Assimilation has become one of those words one hesitates to use in polite company. It is acceptable to talk about the assimilation of Jews, Italians, and other ethnic groups in the past, but it is generally not OK to suggest that the assimilation—much less Americanization—of Hispanics and other groups is one of the big issues underlying the current anxiety about immigration. Yet no matter what the outcome of the debate over how many immigrants to admit to the United States and what to do about the millions here illegally, many more newcomers will arrive and much anxiety will remain about how they fit into American society.

Nineteenth-century America did not possess a magic formula for assimilation, but it did have something we lack: a rough consensus about what newcomers must do to enjoy the rights and privileges of citizenship and how to help them meet those responsibilities. Today, we cannot even agree whether immigrants are fortunate newcomers full of potential to help make a better America or oppressed minorities who must be protected from a malign society bent on stripping them of their identity. The public schools, political parties, and other institutions that once guided the immigrant transition are in disarray. And while immigration policy, whatever its many complications, is almost exclusively a matter of federal law, there really can be no such thing as assimilation policy, since assimilation is influenced by an immense tangle of political, social, and economic forces.

The articles in this issue take a street-level look at how things are working out in everyday life. They offer a mixed picture. Here in Washington we may get only a partial view of that reality, but it is largely an encouraging one. Particularly when I visit the schools my children attend, I marvel at the good fortune that has brought America so much energy and talent. When we are finished with our latest immigration debate, I hope we can still say, as George Washington did, that “the bosom of America is open” to people from abroad, along with “a participation of all our rights and privileges, if by decency and propriety of conduct they appear to merit the enjoyment.”

—STEVEN LAGERFELD



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LETTERS

HOW TO RETIRE

IN "PAYING FOR IT" [*WQ*, SPRING '06], Sylvester Schieber reminds us that the first wave of baby boomers has turned 60 and asks how we will pay for their retirement, arguing that inertia has prevented the United States from addressing the impending crisis of population aging. Yet we have had to make room for the baby boomers every step of the way. When they entered kindergarten, playgrounds were littered with trailers because classrooms were full. When they reached college age, enrollments soared. When they began purchasing homes, housing prices skyrocketed. Now that they are retiring, can we handle the challenge?

I suspect that we can. Several incentives, some planned, some inadvertent, are already in place to encourage later retirement. The first is the uptick in the age of eligibility for full Social Security benefits, from 65 to 67, which Congress enacted in 1983. The second is the shift from defined-benefit to defined-contribution plans that both Schieber and Andrew Achenbaum ["What Is Retirement For?," *WQ*, Spring '06] describe. Unlike defined-benefit plans, which encourage retirement after so many years of service, defined-contribution plans reward continued work. Finally, retiree health benefits are going the way of the dinosaur. In 1985, 70 percent of employers offered health-insurance benefits to early retirees, those aged 55

to 64; by 2006, only 13 percent did. People without these benefits are forced to delay retirement until they reach 65 and become eligible for Medicare.

These incentives for continued employment are already having an effect. After a three-decades-long decline in the age of retirement, in 1992 the trend began moving in the opposite direction. From 1995 to 2005, labor force participation rates among men aged 62 to 64 increased from 46 to 51 percent and among women from 33 to 39 percent. In the same period there was also an increase in labor force participation among men and women 65 and older.

If economic growth continues at its present pace and the baby boomers retire later, the Social Security crisis may never materialize. More likely, any future crisis will be triggered by health care costs. These costs can only be contained through a program that guarantees universal coverage, eliminating the inefficiency and cost shifting in the current mix of public and private benefits that leaves 46 million Americans uncovered.

Schieber is correct that it is time to stop dithering. The question is, what solutions will resolve the impending age crisis in a just way? If we look to Sweden for a solution, then we need to remember that Sweden has remarkably little income inequality and provides social protection for children, young families,

and the elderly. Swedes were willing to make compromises in public pensions because they had confidence that poor elderly people like those described by Beth Shulman ["Sweating the Golden Years," *WQ*, Spring '06] would not be forced to work or middle-aged people forced to forgo care because they had no health insurance.

Jill Quadagno

Author, One Nation, Uninsured: Why the U.S. Has No National Health Insurance (2005)
Professor of Sociology
Florida State University
Tallahassee, Fla.

DESPITE INTENSE DEBATE OVER Social Security reform, most recently prompted by President George W. Bush's failed attempt at a fix, no significant legislation has been enacted since 1983. Sylvester Schieber argues that reform is necessary sooner rather than later to deal with the fiscal consequences of demographic aging. Like other proponents of partial privatization, Schieber refers to foreign models to make a case for the supposedly pressing need to restructure Social Security. He does not explicitly acknowledge that comprehensive pension reform is a complicated *political* task in most advanced industrial countries.

Schieber states that Canadian legislators reduced the level of benefits that wealthier citizens receive through the Old Age Security program, a modest flat pension that remains quasi-universal. Yet the truth is that the fiscal claw-back mentioned by Schieber

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affects only a small portion of the elderly population, and saves relatively little for the federal treasury. In the second half of the 1990s, the Chrétien government's proposal to abolish the flat pension failed miserably amid labor and feminist protest.

In countries where major pension reforms did occur, the reform process often involved long negotiations between economic and political actors, as was the case in Sweden. Of course, Sweden enacted a comprehensive reform that will help it to contend with the long-term consequences of demographic aging. Yet this reform occurred in a country dealing with a far greater fiscal and demographic challenge than the United States faces. Without major restructuring, the Swedish pension system would have collapsed.

Although Social Security will con-

front a significant demographic and fiscal challenge down the road, the American demographic situation is comparatively less disadvantageous. Japan and many European countries face the prospect of significant population decline, which is not the case of the United States. This fact translates into a moderate fiscal challenge for the decades to come. According to the 2005 Social Security Board of Trustees report, "Social Security could be brought into actuarial balance over the next 75 years in various ways, including an immediate increase of 15 percent in the amount of payroll taxes or an immediate reduction in benefits of 13 percent (or some combination of the two)." Considering that the American payroll tax is much lower than that of countries such as Germany, Italy, and Sweden, even a two-percentage-point increase in pay-

Alexander von Humboldt



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roll tax would leave the United States in a competitive position where payroll tax levels are concerned. Interestingly, Schieber does not even mention the possibility of a modest tax increase, which would represent a much more straightforward way to avoid any future fiscal crisis than the partial privatization many American conservatives—including President Bush—support.

Social Security reform is a controversial political issue. Considering the growing electoral influence of the “gray lobby” and the fragmented nature of federal institutions stemming from checks and balances, it is unlikely that a painful reform involving benefits cuts and/or tax hikes will occur in the absence of a short-term fiscal crisis. Even more than it does in other countries, Social Security reform in the United States remains a political puzzle. In such a context, using foreign models to promote unnecessarily radical reforms is unlikely to work, especially when the data available suggest that the United States faces comparatively modest demographic challenges that a set of small-scale adjustments could ultimately solve.

Daniel Béland

*Author, Social Security: History and Politics
From the New Deal to the
Privatization Debate (2005)
Associate Professor of Sociology
University of Calgary
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AGING BABY BOOMERS ARE CERTAINLY among the beneficiaries of the longevity we’ve achieved in modern times, but they are not alone. Many of the boomers’ own elders will still be alive when their grown sons and daughters receive that first Social

Security check. New retirees will discover that their parents need physical and/or financial help, and that they are first in line to provide it. Much of what gets written about retirement overlooks the reality of these caregiving responsibilities, and the four articles in the *WQ*’s “The Sovereign State of Retirement” cluster are no exception.

In truth, I never thought about this myself until 1993, when I began to follow a cohort of working and middle-class people in rural New York as they approached, entered, and experienced the first five years of life after work. They too had bought into the image of maturity’s freedom and active lifestyles promoted by the media and the AARP. Many did enjoy such a retirement, but others quickly learned to expect the unexpected. The unplanned-for but not-so-uncommon events in this group included a spouse’s heart attack, the dementia of an in-law, the cancer of a close friend, and the birth of a grandchild with health problems, all in the years just before or after formal retirement.

Approximately 13 percent of Americans who serve as family caregivers for people older than 18 are themselves over 65. They have learned that even if you can afford to retire from work, you can never retire from your relationships. The recent, dramatic growth in the number of American grandparents now raising their children’s children—the 2000 census shows close to 2.5 million such older caregivers marking up homework, not marking time—speaks to the critical intergenerational commitments of retirees. As one of the people in my study expressed it, “Retirement is not just

freedom from responsibility; it is the freedom to be responsible.” And for these ordinary Americans, that included responsibility for themselves, their families, their friends, and their communities.

Civic engagement itself receives only passing comment in the *WQ*’s essays, yet it is a major focus in the lives of American retirees across the class spectrum. Many of the institutions and initiatives that improve the quality of community life—schools, churches, beautification projects, petition drives, mentoring programs, libraries, hospitals, refugee centers—greatly benefit from the volunteer energy of elders. Arguments about generational equity and the social costs of paying for retirement need to factor in these alternate ways in which retirees continue to pay society for the benefits they receive.

Joel Savishinsky

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Retirement in America (2000)
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MALI’S RECIPE FOR DEMOCRACY

“MALI’S UNLIKELY DEMOCRACY” [*WQ*, Spring ’06], former U.S. ambassador Robert Pringle’s account of one of Africa’s recent success stories, contains many lessons that apply far beyond Mali’s landlocked borders. His use of Robert Kaplan’s gloomy predictions for Mali and the rest of Africa as a foil for his assessment of Mali’s accomplishments over the past 15 years is apt. Kaplan and other journalists—Bryan Mealer, writing on [Continued on Page 9]

FROM THE CENTER

ENGINES OF THE CENTER

AS I WAS CHAIRING A MEETING OF THE WILSON Center's Board of Trustees recently, a hubbub erupted in the hall outside as dozens of people poured out of a conference on "aid for trade" in the auditorium next door. It was just another day at the Wilson Center, where it is not unusual to have four or five events stretching into the evening. But in fact there is nothing ordinary about what the Center does, I thought at that moment, and especially about the staff that makes it happen.

Lee Hamilton, the Center's president and director, rightly serves as its chief public face. But the team that works under him includes people of great and diverse talents. The aid for trade conference was put together in cooperation with other institutions by Kent Hughes, who came to the Center after a varied career in public service capped by a stint as associate deputy secretary of commerce. Kent, who holds a Ph.D. in economics, heads the Center's Program on Science, Technology, America, and the Global Economy, and his particular accomplishment in this conference was to get scholars, senior figures from corporations and international institutions such as the World Trade Organization and the World Bank, and top trade officials from developing countries together to find ways to help those countries build the infrastructure needed to liberalize their trade.

As this impressive throng jammed the hall outside, another Wilson Center program director addressed the board. Historian Christian Ostermann has overseen the Center's History and Public Policy Program for nine years, spearheading its work to secure and make available to scholars and the public the archives of formerly communist states and other countries, and to analyze the new materials. (These materials are available at the Center's website, www.wilsoncenter.org.) This is foundational scholarly work of the first order, with fruits that you read about in your daily newspaper. It has spurred a complete reinterpretation of Cold War history—as reflected in *The Cold War: A New History* (2005), by Yale historian John Lewis Gaddis, who chairs the program's advisory board—and has prompted policymakers to recon-

sider what they thought were settled lessons of history.

Christian and Kent are two of the scholar-administrators who head the 22 programs at the Wilson Center, and they are complemented by a small but highly effective administrative team—all under the supervision of Michael Van Dusen, the Center's indispensable deputy director. Many of them were sitting in on the board meeting, from Leslie Johnson and John Dysland, the heads of administration and financial management, respectively, to Robert Litwak of the Division of International Studies and Cynthia Arnson, who oversees the Latin American Program, to *Wilson Quarterly* editor Steven Lagerfeld and *dialogue* host George Seay. Also among those attending was Middle East Program director Haleh Esfandiari, an accomplished journalist, administrator, and scholar who taught at Princeton after the revolution in her native Iran, with whom I have worked particularly closely and productively because of my deep interest in the Middle East.

Christian was preceded before the board by Robert Hathaway, director of the Center's Asia Program. Bob detailed his large menu of activities and joked that a program concerned with half the world's population surely deserves half the Center's financial resources. That got a chuckle from the room, and it also crystallized the spirit of this very unusual place.

In my long career in business and diplomacy, and in my association with many nonprofit organizations, I have never seen an institution in which so many people combine intellect, entrepreneurial ability, and a capacity to work together collegially. And in a city all but defined by partisan divisions, the Center is notable for the absence of such considerations in its work. The commitment to excellence and open inquiry that the *WQ*'s readers see in its pages is the same commitment that animates the Center every day, making it that rare Washington institution where one can be sure the hubbub in the hall is not all sound and fury, but the sound of something good happening.

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[*Continued from page 6*] Congo in the April 2006 issue of *Harper's*, is a recent example—offer lurid but entertaining depictions of a dysfunctional continent in its death throes. Such assaults on “nation-building” and democracy promotion are becoming fashionable, and Pringle provides a healthy antidote.

Democracy in Mali would seem unlikely because it is a poor country with a history of dictatorship, contending ethnic groups, and a predominantly Muslim population. Yet like Mali, many other poor countries in West Africa and other parts of the continent with similar histories and demographics have made significant political progress in the same time span, and continue to do so. Benin held its fourth set of democratic national elections in March, in which the incumbent stepped aside after two terms and an independent newcomer assumed the presidency. Ghana's liberal democracy is also well established by now, and President John Kuffour is expected to step down after elections next year. After years of vicious civil war, Sierra Leone and Liberia are recovering with fledgling democracies. Mauritania's (Muslim) dictatorship fell after a coup last year, and the current military government has pledged to hold democratic elections and hand over power to civilians, citing Mali as an inspiration. Senegal's mature (Muslim) democracy will hold elections later this year that are sure to be exciting—and peaceful. Impoverished (Muslim) neighbor Niger is democratic. Nigeria has been disappointing, as President Olusegun Obasanjo is suspected of considering a third term and unrest in the Niger delta is roiling oil markets, but the country will hold its third set of elections next year, and recent political developments, including the emer-

gence of a new party, suggest that democracy is alive and well. Looking elsewhere around the continent, from South Africa to Somaliland, Mozambique to Mauritius, Botswana to Burundi, nearly every country can be said to have made progress, if not always as dramatic and sound as Mali's example.

There are exceptions, of course. Zimbabwe continues to deteriorate. Yoweri Museveni's success in changing the constitution to permit him a third term in Uganda was a setback. Eritrea, Rwanda, and Equatorial Guinea remain closed dictatorships, and Somalia is still mired in anarchy. Nevertheless, even such hard cases as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, and Ethiopia are arguably making painstaking progress in emerging from devastating conflict and dictatorship.

Negotiations, elections, and action by the press and civil society do make a difference. Much of the continent is a work in progress, but the traditional systems and a national foundation mythology that Mali has put to the service of democracy, as Pringle so eloquently describes, are also at work elsewhere.

Mali certainly “punches above its weight” in Africa and internationally. It will host the fourth conference of the Community of Democracies in 2007, which reflects the leadership role it has played on the continent in promoting democracy, and should also highlight the democratic progress elsewhere in Africa. The Bush administration, Congress, and their counterparts in the international community deserve credit for their support of Africa’s efforts at reform and democratic development. The process has been messy and there will always be setbacks, but that should not be an excuse for despair or withdrawal. Africans are taking the lead and making headway, no matter what the pessimists say.

Dave Peterson

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ROBERT PRINGLE RIGHTLY credits two leaders, Alpha Konaré and Amadou Toumani Touré, for their roles in Mali’s transition from years of military dictatorship to democracy, and highlights the success of the national conference in 1991 that brought together a diverse group of Malians to decide the future of the country. Other African countries can learn from this model of change as well as the moderating and restrained influence of Konaré and Touré.

Pringle is also right to encourage wealthier nations, and the United States in particular, to do more to support Mali’s democracy and its economic development. The U.S. government and news media paid virtually no attention to the transition to democracy in this West African country, focusing instead on collapsed states and civil and ethnic conflict in the region. Mali’s success story—granted, an unpredictable and initially hesitant one in a very poor, strategically unimportant, and generally unknown country—was largely ignored. Yet it is not too late for Washington to promote the continuation of democracy in the region.

As for economic progress, Mali has done a very good job in halting the spread of HIV/AIDS. Its tourism sector could be developed dramatically. Mali currently lacks the infrastructure for expanded tourism, but the potential is certainly there and should be tapped.

Mali’s road to further democracy and development is sure to be long and complicated. However, the United States can play an essential role, not only by aiding Mali but also by enhancing America’s image in Africa and the Muslim world in general.

Andrew F. Clark

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RELIGION IN THE WHITE HOUSE

ELIZABETH EDWARDS SPALDING [“True Believers,” *WQ*, Spring ’06] attempts to ease the concern of “more secular” Americans who worry about the extent to which President George W. Bush integrates his religious beliefs

into public policy. She recalls for us that presidents Wilson and Truman openly displayed and made on-the-job use of their religious beliefs—and she cites their great accomplishments. Attributing their success to “the hand God played,” she wonders why we are so apprehensive about Bush. She seems to regard faith-based politics as an acceptable alternative to secular politics.

Alas, Spalding has addressed her message to the wrong audience. Directed at the less secular (and more suspensive) worriers, it might have some effect. Directed at the more secular group, it falls on deaf ears. True secularists reject all notions of knowledge acquired by any other means than reason. We are irreligious, not merely unreligious. We oppose political decisions supported only by religious dogma. We abhor even the smallest sign of religious extremism in public affairs. We see many such signs in the Bush administration.

Dewey Wasser

Thousand Oaks, Calif.

RE-READING PEARL BUCK

I AM A TEACHER, AND I CAN’T imagine any history or English teacher in the world excluding *The Good Earth* from the classroom; we have hardcover editions since they get so much use. But it’s almost impossible to find current material relevant to Pearl Buck. Sheila Melvin’s article [“Pearl’s Great Price,” *WQ*, Spring ’06] was priceless, not only for the historical background but for its treatment of Pearl Buck and her work as they figure into current relations between China and the United States.

Susan Addelston

New York, N.Y.

FINDINGS

BRIEF NOTES OF INTEREST ON ALL TOPICS

75 Years Tall

An Empire vast and secure

The Empire State Building's 75th anniversary, on May 1, had a bitter-sweet tinge, for it was 9/11 that restored the skyscraper to its status as New York City's tallest. But then,

9/11 casts a different light over several moments of Empire State Building history.

When the skyscraper opened in 1931, deep in the Depression, it seemed a towering miscalculation. "Many of its floors were closed off," writes Piers Brendon in *The Dark*

Valley (2000), "and one Dartmouth honors graduate was delighted to secure the job of flushing all its unused lavatories every day to prevent chemicals in the water from marring the porcelain finish." Architect Frank Lloyd Wright rejoiced. He termed the Empire State Building "a tomb that will mark the end of an epoch," and said that Manhattan should outlaw these "Molochs raised for commercial greatness" by imposing a height limit of five stories. (Wright later changed his mind and designed a mile-high skyscraper, never built.) On September 17, 2001, New Urbanists James Howard Kunstler and Nikos A. Salingaros likewise called for a strict height limit, pronouncing "the age of skyscrapers . . . at an end."

War brought the Empire State Building prosperity, but also catastrophe. On July 28, 1945, a B-25 bomber, lost in fog, smashed into the 79th floor. One of the plane's engines killed an "elevator girl"; the other tore through the building and out the other side. It was a Saturday, so the crash and ensuing fire killed just 14 people. For all the obvious differences, a few aspects of the disaster prefigure 9/11: heroic rescues by firefighters and tenants, charred bodies, and, in at least one instance, a man who leapt to his death rather than die in flames.



The Empire State building had been standing for only 14 years when an errant B-25 bomber crashed into its upper floors in July 1945. Eleven office workers and three crew members were killed in the accident.

After Hiroshima, attention turned to a new peril. “If fused correctly,” Major General Thomas F. Farrell told *Reader’s Digest*, “one of those [atomic] bombs could blow the Empire State Building to hell. There might be a sort of stump left for a few floors above the ground, but it would be completely unlivable.”

But would a 9/11-like attack on the Empire State Building leave only a stump? Not necessarily. “The Empire State’s foundations are firmly planted in bedrock; its stairwells are encased in thick concrete, and its steel interior, married to the limestone cladding, is more like a vertical radiator than the spindly framework typical of newer towers,” Mark Kingwell writes in *Nearest Thing to Heaven: The Empire State Building and American Dreams* (Yale Univ. Press). So “if a jet plane ever struck the building, it is unlikely it would melt and collapse from the inside as the twin towers did.” And this year’s 75th-anniversary celebration would have proceeded on schedule.

Irrationality at the Bar

Better tell it to the judge

Three-quarters of the time, a criminal defendant in federal court will seek a trial by jury rather than a bench trial before a judge—mainly because defense attorneys consider judges more likely to convict. Actually, judges are far *less* conviction prone. “Between 1989 and 2002, the average conviction rate for federal criminal defendants was 84 percent in jury trials, but a mere 55 percent in bench

trials,” Andrew D. Leipold writes in *The Washington University Law Quarterly* (vol. 83, no. 1). Criminals aren’t the only ones who misreckon the consequences of their actions.

Damned Depressed

The Transylvania blues

Given the popularity of diagnosing the dead—Did Herod suffer from kidney disease, Napoleon from stomach cancer, Oscar Wilde from meningitis?—it was only a matter of time before someone diagnosed the undead. In the lit-crit anthology *Vampires* (Rodopi), Pete Remington argues that the bloodsuckers in Anne Rice novels exhibit classic symptoms of depression: They eat oddly and sporadically, sleep to excess (sometimes for centuries), and grapple with issues of self-esteem arising from eternal damnation. Forget the wooden stakes and silver bullets: cue the Zoloff and Paxil.

Standards of the Bureau

Regulations’ costs

The Russian Bureau of Standards, *Rostechregulirovanie*, establishes technical requirements that manufacturers should heed. But, contrary to Russian federal law, the bureau declines to reveal those requirements to the public. Instead it sells its information to certain corporations, which in turn sell the full set of regulations for roughly \$10,000 U.S., or a single page for nearly \$20—a profitable arrangement all around.

Enter Ivan Pavlov, a human rights lawyer and former Starovoitova fel-

low at the Wilson Center, who sued to make the regulations freely available. Earlier this year a court ruled for Pavlov, but the bureau appealed. Then, in late May, shortly before the appeal was to be heard, the tale shifted from Kafka to Mario Puzo.

“I was putting my briefcase in the back seat of my car when some guy asked me if I had a screwdriver,” Pavlov told Russia’s *St. Petersburg Times*. “I said I didn’t. . . . I was about to get into my car when he hit me in the back of the head with a hard, sharp object.” Pavlov collapsed, and two or three other men appeared and brutally kicked him. He ended up hospitalized with a concussion and several stitches. In Russia, promoting free information can exact a high price.

The Smoke Hoods in the ‘Hood

Dress for distress

With *Preparedness Now! An Emergency Survival Guide for Civilians and Their Families* (Process Media), Aton Edwards aims to make survivalism chic. Edwards will promote the book at a Virgin Records store in New York City later this year with Chuck D., the former frontman of Public Enemy, who’s “a fan of Aton’s and a proponent of preparedness to the post-New Orleans hip-hop community,” according to the book’s publisher. (Post-New Orleans?) The evening will feature models in “modified SWAT team uniforms and other military gear, customized and transformed into survivalist hipster fashion,” who will display “the highest-end preparedness gear available.” The new bling.

Wrong Holes

Snafus after death

During the Korean War, each GI's file included a punch card recording his name, rank, serial number, and much else. A half-century later the cards still exist, but there's no device that can read them. Erin Mitsunaga, a case manager with the Defense Department's Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, recently broke most of the code, then compared the data on a sample of cards to information in the files. Some disparities proved considerable, she reports in *The Journal of Forensic Science* (May 2006). Error rates on the cards ranged from one percent (a serviceman's birth year or serial number) to 63 percent (his shoe size); more than a third of the cards recorded the wrong height. The fog of war can confound those who punch keys as well as those who pull triggers. And the glitches may matter: During and after the war, the military relied on the cards and primitive IBM computers to help identify the remains of unknown servicemen. Because of the miscoding, some families probably received and buried the wrong remains, and some identifiable remains joined the unknowns in a military cemetery.

Posthumous Stardom

High noon in Gdańsk

Gary Cooper may have played his greatest role 28 years after his death. As Poland's 1989 elections approached, Lech Walesa's Solidarity movement printed



In this poster urging Poles to vote at “high noon,” Gary Cooper was enlisted as a Solidarity supporter.

posters of Cooper as Marshal Will Kane in the 1952 film *High Noon*. The 1989 Cooper wears a Solidarity logo above his badge and carries a ballot in his hand. More important, Bertrand M. Patenaude notes in *A Wealth of Ideas: Revelations From the Hoover Institution Archives* (Stanford Univ. Press), the designer erased Cooper's holster and gun—a signal that “Poland's revolution was to be nonviolent; the call was to the ballot box, not the barricades.”

Trademark Devilry?

Owning a species

In the late 1990s, Buffalo Bill's Brew Pub in Hayward, California, began marketing Tasmanian Devil ale. The beer caught on, but efforts to trademark the name fizzled. Time Warner owns the Looney Tunes character Tasmanian Devil, or Taz, which, the company insists, gives it control over every use of the

name in commerce—even when confusion is nearly impossible (the ale's label features a vicious-looking Tasmanian dog). Tasmanians were equally surprised to learn that an American corporation owns the name of their native animal, according to *Tasmanian Devil* (Allen & Unwin), by David Owen and David Pemberton. In 1997, a lawyer for Time Warner reassured a Tasmanian newspaper that it's fine to call “a Tasmanian devil a Tasmanian devil”; you just can't use the name as a brand for goods. *Any* goods. Tasmanian politicians have protested, but to no avail. In cartoons, as it happens, Taz is known for his rapaciousness.

Puttin' Off the Blitz

An imperturbable prophet

In H. G. Wells's novel *The War in the Air* (1908), London (and most of the rest of the world) gets destroyed by bombs dropped from “aeroplanes” and dirigibles. Some three decades after the novel's publication came the Blitz, during which Wells refused to leave London or, on at least one occasion, the dining table.

As Wells was lunching one afternoon, Philip Seib recounts in *Broadcasts From the Blitz* (Potomac), Nazi bombs began falling. Wells's hostess, Lady Sibyl Colefax, headed for the air raid shelter, but her guest wouldn't budge.

“I'm enjoying a very good lunch,” he protested. “Why should I be disturbed by some wretched little barbarian adolescents in a machine? This thing has no surprises for me—I foresaw it long ago.

“Sibyl, I want my cheese.”

Playing With Our Minds

Violent video games teach our kids to point and shoot, say their critics. The truth may be every bit as frightening to members of a generation raised to believe they're thinking outside the box.

BY CHRIS SUELLENTROP

ON A MONDAY EVENING LAST FALL, IN THE Crystal Gateway Marriott a few blocks from the Pentagon, a group of academics, journalists, and software developers gathered to play with the U.S. military's newest toys. In one corner of the hotel's ballroom, two men climbed into something resembling a jeep. One clutched a pistol and positioned himself behind the steering wheel, while the other manned the vehicle's turret. In front of them, a huge, three-paneled television displayed moving images of an urban combat zone. Nearby, another man shot invisible infrared beams from his rifle at a video-screen target. In the middle of the room a player knelt, lifted a large, bazooka-like device to his shoulder, and began launching imaginary antitank missiles.

The reception was hosted by the Army Game Project, best known for creating *America's Army*, the official video game of the U.S. Army, and was intended to demonstrate how the military's use of video games has changed in just a few years. *America's Army* was released in 2002 as a recruiting tool, the video-game version of those "Be

All You Can Be" (now "An Army of One") television ads. But the game has evolved beyond mere propaganda for the PlayStation crowd into a training platform for the modern soldier.

If you have absorbed the familiar critique of video games as a mindless, dehumanizing pastime for a nihilistic Columbine generation, the affinity between gaming and soldiering may seem nightmarishly logical: Of course the military wants to condition its recruits on these Skinner boxes, as foreshadowed by science fiction produced when video games were little more than fuzzy blips on the American screen. The film *The Last Starfighter* (1984) and the novel *Ender's Game* (1985) depict futuristic militaries that use video games to train and track the progress of unknowing children, with the objective of creating a pool of recruits. (The code name for *America's Army* when it was in development was "Operation Star Fighter," an homage to its cinematic predecessor.)

Some members of today's military do view video games as a means of honing fighting skills. The director of the technology division at Quantico Marine Base told *The Washington Post* last year that today's young recruits, the majority of whom are experienced video-game players, "probably feel less inhibited, down in their primal

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The U.S. military initially released the video game *America's Army* to attract recruits, but is now using it as a training tool. Here, a game developer runs through a convoy exercise in the army's version so he'll know what to shoot for as he programs for new civilian audiences.

level, pointing their weapons at somebody." In the same article, a retired Marine colonel speculated that the gaming generation has been conditioned to be militaristic: "Remember the days of the old Sparta, when everything they did was towards war?" The experiences of some soldiers seem to bear out his words. A combat engineer interviewed by the *Post* compared his tour in Iraq to *Halo*, a popular video game that simulates the point of view of a futuristic soldier battling an alien army.

To view video games merely as mock battlegrounds, however, is to ignore the many pacific uses to which they are being put. The U.S. military itself is developing games that "train soldiers, in effect, how not to shoot," according to a *New York Times Magazine* article of a few years ago. Rather than use video games to turn out mindless killers, the armed forces are fashioning games that impart specific skills, such as parachuting and critical thinking. Even games such as those displayed at the Marriott that teach weapons handling don't reward indiscriminate

slaughter, the shoot-first-ask-questions-later bluster that hardcore gamers deride as "button mashing." Players of *America's Army* participate in small units with other players connected via the Internet to foster teamwork and leadership.

Nor is the U.S. military alone in recognizing the training potential of video games. The Army's display was only one exhibit at the Serious Games Summit, "serious" being the industry's label for those games that are created to do more than entertain. Games have been devised to train emergency first-responders, to recreate ancient civilizations, to promote world peace. The Swedish Defense College has developed a game to teach UN peacekeepers how to interact with and pacify civilian populations without killing them. *Food Force*, an *America's Army* imitator, educates players about how the United Nations World Food Program fights global hunger. A group of Carnegie Mellon University students, among them a former Israeli intelligence officer, is developing *PeaceMaker*, a game in

which players take the role of either the Israeli prime minister or the Palestinian president and work within political constraints toward a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The very phrase “serious games,” however, suggests that unserious games may well be the societal blight that many believe them to be. It’s easier to vilify games such as those in the *Grand Theft Auto* series, in which the player’s goal is to rise to power in various criminal organizations by carjacking vehicles and killing their owners with a variety of weapons—a baseball bat, a Molotov cocktail, an AK-47. But *Grand Theft Auto* and its sequels are popular not just because of their transgressive content, but also because they are designed to allow players to roam freely across a gigantic three-dimensional cityscape. (With their combination of technical accomplishment and controversial subject matter, the *Grand Theft Auto* titles might be the video-game analogues of movies such as *Bonnie and Clyde* or, more recently, *Pulp Fiction*.)

As far back as 1982, when video games consisted of simple fare like *Space Invaders*—a two-dimensional arcade game—a rabbi warned on *The MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour* about their dehumanizing effects: “When children spend hours in front of a screen playing some of these games that are inherently violent, they will tend to look at people as they look at these little blips on the screen that must be zapped—that must be killed before they are killed. And it is my concern that 10, 20 years down the line we’re going to see a group of children who then become adults who don’t view people as human beings, but rather view them as other blips to be destroyed—as things.”

The rabbi articulated an objection that has been heard repeatedly as video games have grown from a pastime for awkward, outdoors-fearing children into a form of mass entertainment enjoyed mostly by adults. Last year, Americans spent a total of \$7 billion on almost 230 million computer and video games, according to the Entertainment Software Association, an industry group. Both of



In *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*, players adopt the role of a gang member attempting to win back territory from rivals in a crime-ridden virtual cityscape. It is one of the chief targets of politicians and other critics who claim that video games are teaching children violent behaviors and bad values.

those numbers—sales revenues and units sold—have roughly tripled over the past 10 years. Defining who is a “gamer” can be tricky, as the definition can include everyone who has played *Minesweeper* on a personal computer or who kills time at the office with computer mahjong, but studies conducted by the ESA and others estimate that roughly half of all Americans play computer and video games. According to a study released in May by the ESA, the average American gamer is 33 years old. A full quarter of gamers are over 50, while only 31 percent are younger than 18. Playing video games is still a predominantly male pastime, but almost 40 percent of gamers are women; more adult women play video games than do boys 17 and under.

Those who assume that video-game players are a bloodthirsty lot might be surprised to learn that of last year’s 10 best-selling games for the PlayStation and Xbox consoles, not one was a shoot-’em-up. Six of the most popular games were sports titles—including *Madden NFL*, a cultural juggernaut among athletes and young men—and the other four were *Star Wars* games. The bestselling PC game last year was *World of Warcraft*, a multiplayer swords-and-sorcery game that millions of subscribers pay a monthly fee to play. *World of Warcraft* is the latest and most popular in the genre of massively multiplayer online role-playing games, commonly called “virtual worlds.” In these games, thousands of players can interact with each other by connecting simultaneously over the Internet. (There’s a debate among specialists whether some of these worlds, such as *Second Life*, which offers its “residents” no competitions or quests, even qualify as games.)

Despite their popularity, video games remain, in the opinion of many (particularly those who don’t play them), brainless or, worse, brain-destroying candy. But for as long as critics have decried video games as the latest permutation in a long line of nefarious, dehumanizing technologies, others have offered a competing,

more optimistic vision of their role in shaping American society. Opposite the rabbi on that *MacNeil/Lehrer* broadcast a quarter-century ago was Paul Trachtman, an editor for *Smithsonian* magazine, who argued that video games provide a form of mental exercise. Ignore the dubious content, the “surface or the imagery or the story line,” he suggested, and you will see that games teach not merely how best to go about “zapping a ship or a monster.” Underneath the juvenilia is “a test of your facility for understanding the logic design that the programmer wrote into the game.” Games, in short, are teachers. And electronic games are uniquely suited to training individuals how to navigate our modern information society.

As the gaming generation has matured, it has advanced this idea with increasing vigor. Last year, Steven Johnson published *Everything Bad Is Good for You: How Today’s Popular Culture Is Actually Making Us Smarter*, which included a brief for an idea that has been gaining currency among academics and game developers: All video games, even the ones that allow you to kill prostitutes, are a form of education, or at least

DESPITE THEIR POPULARITY, video games remain, in the opinion of many, brainless or, worse, brain-destroying candy.

edutainment. Games can do more than make you a better soldier, or improve your hand-eye coordination or your spatial orientation skills. They can make you more intelligent.

On one level, this argument isn’t very surprising. Games of all kinds are a part of almost every human society, and they have long been used to inculcate the next generation with desirable virtues and skills. We enroll our kids in Little League not only so they will have a good time, but also to teach them about sportsmanship, teamwork, and the importance of practice and hard work. The Dutch historian Johan Huizinga argued in *Homo Ludens*, his 1938 ur-text of game studies, that the concept of “play” should be considered a “third

function” for humanity, one that is “just as important as reasoning and making.”

In the case of video games, even their critics acknowledge that they are instructing our children. The critics just don’t like the form and the sometimes violent and sexually explicit content of the instruction, which they believe teaches children aggressive behaviors. Yet if such games are nothing more than “murder simulators,” as one critic has called them, why is it—as gaming enthusiasts never tire of pointing out—that the murder rate has declined in recent years, when there are more video games, and more violent ones, than ever? Why do IQ scores continue their slight but perceptible rise if an entire generation of children, the oldest of whom are now in their thirties—a cohort to which I belong—stunted its development with electronic pap? The important thing to find out about video games isn’t whether they are teachers. “The question is,” as game designer Raph Koster writes in *A Theory of Fun for Game Design* (2004), “what do they teach?”

The generally uncredited father of video games was William A. Higinbotham, who, while working as a government physicist, invented a game of electronic Ping-Pong and displayed it during a visitors’ day for the Brookhaven National Laboratory on Long Island in October 1958. By the next year, the game had been dismantled because its computer and oscilloscope components were needed for other jobs. Higinbotham’s game might have been forgotten—except by readers of the *Brookhaven Bulletin*, which published a 1981 story speculating that he had invented the first video game—were it not for the fact that one of the lab’s visitors that day was high school student David Ahl, who would write the 1978 book *Basic Computer Games* and become the editor of *Creative Computing*. From the pages of this magazine for computer hobbyists, Ahl proclaimed Higinbotham the grandfather of the phenomenon in 1982.

The more influential and more commonly acknowledged grandfather was Steve Russell. As a Massachusetts Institute of Technology student in 1961, Russell created a rocket-ship duel called *Spacewar!* that could be played on one of MIT’s handful of computers, the PDP-1. Then, in the same way that Microsoft packages

its Windows operating system with solitaire and other games, Digital Equipment Corporation, the manufacturer of the PDP-1, began shipping it with the game preloaded in memory, influencing computer science students around the country.

In 1972, Magnavox introduced *Odyssey*, which, like Higinbotham’s game, was an adaptation of Ping-Pong (for whatever reason, table tennis was the game of choice for early video-game creators) that was the first home console for video gaming. The next 30 years saw the introduction of Atari, Nintendo, Sony’s PlayStation, and Microsoft’s Xbox, not to mention the many games designed for the growing numbers of personal computers. Higinbotham’s black-and-white blips have, over the past half-century, morphed into sophisticated displays of computer animation that increasingly resemble films, with original scripts, music, and often-breathtaking visual beauty. The *King Kong* video game released last year to coincide with Peter Jackson’s film remake featured an arresting parade of apatosauruses marching through a valley on Kong’s home of Skull Island. The sequence was so gorgeous that I set down my controller and just marveled at it for a while.

As was true of games before the digital age, there’s a remarkable array of video games. Chess and bowling aren’t very similar, but we intuitively understand that both are games, if different species of the genus. Likewise, video games encompass everything from simple online puzzles to simulated football games and professional wrestling matches to the “God game,” in which the player adopts an omniscient view to influence the development of entire societies. In *The Sims*, the best-selling PC game of all time, players control the lives of individual humans as they go about their mundane lives. (It may sound unappealing, but *The Sims* comes from a long tradition. It is, in effect, another way to play house.) New genres frequently emerge. A “music” genre has arisen in response to the popularity of *Dance Dance Revolution*, a game in which players must move their feet in time to music on different areas of a dance pad. It’s basically a fast-moving, musical, single-player version of Twister.

Exactly what is new about video games, other than their electronic nature, can be difficult to pin down. In the 21st century, almost all children’s toys have an electronic component, but that doesn’t make them all video

games. In *The Ultimate History of Video Games* (2001), game journalist Steven Kent cites pinball as a mechanical ancestor of today's digital games. Pinball created a panic in some quarters—no pun intended—as a new and dangerous influence on society. Foreshadowing the antics of today's antigaming politicians was New York mayor Fiorello La Guardia, who smashed pinball machines with a sledgehammer and banned them from his city in the 1930s, a prohibition that was not lifted until the 1970s. (To be fair to La Guardia, governments have long perceived societal threats from new games. In the 1400s Scotland banned golf, now its proud national pastime, because too many young men were neglecting archery to practice their swings.)

Nowadays you can play pinball on your PC, as every Windows XP machine comes packaged with a video-game version. The difference between this digital pinball and its mechanical predecessor is, at root, aesthetic. The rules of the game are the same, just as the rules and gameplay of computer solitaire and chess are identical to those of their analog forebears. (Beyond the translation of playing cards and chess pieces into pixels,

there are some key differences, of course. For one thing, the computer doesn't let you cheat—or, in pinball, "tilt.") Jesper Juul, a Danish video-game theorist, defines games such as pinball, solitaire, and chess as "emergence" games, by which he means that the gameplay emerges from a relatively simple set of rules. Football and basketball—whether played online or off—are also emergence games, as are chess, backgammon, Othello, and board games such as Risk and Monopoly. All those games can now be played using computers, but that doesn't make them new, exactly.

The first game that diverged from this 5,000-year-old emergence model was a 1976 computer game called *Adventure* that combined the elements of narrative with gameplay. *Adventure* was essentially an interactive text, somewhat similar to the books in the *Choose Your Own Adventure* series. While reading the story, the player typed in commands to tell the character what to do and to learn what happened next. Juul calls *Adventure* the

first "progression" game, a new model that inspired most of today's video games, from *Grand Theft Auto* to *Halo*.

Nongamers who watch their slack-jawed, twitchy-thumbed children and conclude that they are brain dead are making the mistake of observing the spectator rather than the game itself. Research has shown that playing video games can help people improve their ability to manipulate spatial information, and that as little as 10 hours of play can improve a person's ability to process visual information. (These studies were approvingly cited by the deputy director of the Army Game Project last fall.) But focusing on how video games improve coordination and memory misses the point. In a recent issue of *Wired*, well-known game designer Will Wright compares this mistake to studying film by watch-

GAME DESIGNER WILL WRIGHT
proposes that video games teach "the
essence of the scientific method."

ing the audience rather than what's on the screen: "You would conclude that movies induce lethargy and junk food binges. That may be true, but you're missing the big picture."

Wright proposes that video games teach "the essence of the scientific method," that "through trial and error, players build a model of the underlying game." To succeed, a player must establish a hypothesis about some aspect of the game, test it, and evaluate the results of the experiment. The organizer of a playground game explains the rules in advance, but a video game often hides its rules, revealing them only as the player figures out how to unlock the game's secrets. And when that happens, a game player can experience an ecstatic Archimedes moment.

Perhaps most important of all, the game adapts itself to the player's ability. "The secret of a video game as a teaching machine isn't its immersive 3-D graphics, but its underlying architecture," writes James Paul Gee, an edu-

cation professor at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and author of *What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy* (2004). “Each level dances around the outer limits of the player’s abilities, seeking at every point to be hard enough to be just doable. In cognitive science, this is referred to as the regime of competence principle, which results in a feeling of simultaneous pleasure and frustration—a sensation as familiar to gamers as sore thumbs.” It is in that spirit that Atari founder Nolan Bushnell has said, in a statement that probably best distills the gamer ethos, “The way to have an interesting life is to stay on the steep part of the learning curve.”

Despite the omnipresence of video games—on our computers, our televisions, our phones, and now the back seats of our cars in handheld units—most people who don’t play them still fundamentally misunderstand them. Nongamers often assume that video games, like so many electronic media, are designed to deliver instant, electronic gratification. The opposite is the case, Johnson insists in *Everything Bad Is Good for You*. The best video games are

and came to the provocative conclusion that having played video games as a teenager explains the entire generation gap between those under 34 years of age and those older (the book was published in 2004, so presumably the benchmark is now 36).

Beck and Wade argue that the gamers somehow intuitively acquired traits that many more-senior managers took years to develop and that their nongaming contemporaries still lack. According to their survey, video game players are more likely than nongamers to consider themselves knowledgeable, even expert, in their fields. They are more likely to want pay for performance in the workplace rather than a flat scale. They are more likely to describe themselves as sociable. They’re mildly bossy. Among these traits, perhaps the most important is that gamers, who are well acquainted with the reset button, understand that repeated failure is the road to success.

The very purpose of every game is to become boring, as the player develops successful strategies to defeat it, the game designer Raph Koster observes. The best video games are designed to assist players in figuring out those strate-

gies. The video games that are the most like the real world are often the least fun to play, because they don’t do a good job of communicating to the player what is important and what isn’t—which paths should be taken and which can be safely ignored, which items need

THE REAL WORLD doesn’t always let you hit the reset button and start over. In the real world, there isn’t always a way to win.

to be collected and which can be safely left behind. But the real world doesn’t come with big blue arrows pointing toward the next door you need to open. The real world doesn’t always let you hit the reset button and start over. In the real world, there isn’t always a way to win.

brilliantly designed puzzles. The *Grand Theft Auto* titles can take as long as 60 hours to complete. Finishing them requires discipline, problem solving, decision making, and repeated trial and error.

In a recent *New York Times* column, David Brooks suggested that delayed gratification is the key to success in school, work, and life, and that it is a learned trait. If that’s true, and if the mental gymnasium of video games teaches delayed gratification, then gamers should be, on average, more successful than nongamers. No researcher has proffered that comprehensive a thesis yet, but the authors of *Got Game: How the Gamer Generation Is Reshaping Business Forever* suggest that gamers do come out ahead in the world of business. John C. Beck and Mitchell Wade surveyed 2,500 Americans, mostly business professionals,

As games become better at adapting to the talent and skill levels of their players, more video games will be decoding the players as much as players are decoding the games. “Soon games will start to build simple models of us, the players,” Wright predicts. “They will learn what we like to do, what we’re good at, what interests and challenges us. They will observe us. They will record the decisions we make, consider how we solve problems, and evaluate how skilled we are in various circumstances. Over time, these games will become able to modify themselves



Four members of the Bonner family in Haddon Township, Pennsylvania, play *Halo 2*, a video game in which a genetically enhanced soldier defends humankind from an evil alien race. About half of all Americans play video games, whether killing time playing computer solitaire at the office or killing mutant dinosaurs.

to better ‘fit’ each individual. They will adjust their difficulty on the fly, bring in new content, and create story lines. Much of this original material will be created by other players, and the system will move it to those it determines will enjoy it most.”

It feels preposterous and yet believable to suggest that the adaptive nature of video games might be one reason for the rise of the Organization Kid, a term coined by David Brooks when he visited with Princeton students for a 2001 story in *The Atlantic Monthly*. “They’re not trying to buck the system; they’re trying to climb it,” Brooks wrote of the respectful, deferential students he met. A Princeton sociology professor Brooks interviewed could have been describing ideal soldiers when he said of his students, “They’re eager to please, eager to jump through whatever hoops the faculty puts in front of them, eager to conform.” Brooks summarized the love-the-power worldview of the Organization Kid like this: “There is a fundamental order to the universe, and it works. If you play by its rules and defer to its requirements, you will lead a pretty fantastic life.” That’s a winner’s ideology: Follow

orders, and you’ll be just fine.

Whether you find the content of video games inoffensive or grotesque, their structure teaches players that the best course of action is always to accept the system and work to succeed within it. “Games do not permit innovation,” Koster writes. “They present a pattern. Innovating out of a pattern is by definition outside the magic circle. You don’t get to change the physics of a game.” Nor, when a computer is the referee, do you get to challenge the rules or to argue about their merits. That isn’t to say that there aren’t ways to innovate from within the system. Gamers are famous for coming up with creative approaches to the problems a game presents. But devising a new, unexpected strategy to succeed under the existing rules isn’t the same thing as proposing new rules, new systems, new patterns.

Our video-game brains, trained on success machines, may be undergoing a Mr. Universe workout, one that leaves us stronger but less flexible. So don’t worry that video games are teaching us to be killers. Worry instead that they’re teaching us to salute. ■

India's Path to Greatness

After decades of dormancy, India has blossomed into one of Asia's two emerging powers and an important strategic partner of the United States. How—and whether—it navigates its rise could well determine the future of the whole region.

BY MARTIN WALKER

WHEN THE U.S. AIR FORCE SENT ITS PROUD F-15 fighter pilots against the Indian Air Force in the Cope India war games two years ago, it received a shock. The American pilots found themselves technologically outmatched by nimbler warplanes; tactically outsmarted by the Indian mix of high, low, and converging attack waves; and outfought by the Indians, whose highly trained pilots average more than 180 flying hours a year—roughly the same as their U.S. and Israeli counterparts and slightly more than those of NATO allies such as France and Germany. U.S. general Hal Hornburg said that the results of the exercise, against Indian pilots flying Russian-built Sukhoi Su-30 and French Mirage 2000 fighters, were “a wake-up call.” According to testimony in a House Appropriations Defense Subcommittee hearing, the U.S. F-15s were defeated more than 90 percent of the time in direct combat exercises against the Indians.

But beyond the evidence of India's military expertise and its possession of state-of-the-art fighter aircraft, the real sig-

nificance of the Cope India war games is that they demonstrated the extent of the cooperation between the Indian and U.S. militaries. Their mountain troops now train together in the Himalayas and Alaska, and their special forces mount joint exercises in jungle and underwater warfare. Their aircraft carrier task forces have conducted exercises in the Indian Ocean, and joint antipiracy and antisubmarine drills are routine. Indian and U.S. forces are working together with an intimacy once reserved for the closest NATO allies. The goal—that the militaries of the two countries be able to operate in lockstep—would have been inconceivable in the Cold War era, when India, with its Soviet-supplied military, was seen as a virtual client of Moscow.

The foundation of this new relationship was laid before George W. Bush took office in the White House. In the spring of 1999, Bush, then governor of Texas, was briefed for the first time by the team of foreign-policy advisers that became known as the Vulcans, after the Roman god of fire and iron. Bush began with the frank admission that he knew little about foreign policy. The Vulcans, led by Condoleezza Rice—later to be his national security adviser and then secretary of state—delivered a broad-brush survey of the world, its problems, and its prospects, and recom-

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In New Delhi, President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh celebrate the controversial U.S.-Indian nuclear agreement in March.

mended muscular American leadership in cool-headed pursuit of American interests. When the group finished, Bush had one question: What about India? Another Vulcan team member who was present, future ambassador to India Robert Blackwill, recalled asking Bush why he was so interested in India: “He immediately responded, ‘A billion people in a functioning democracy. Isn’t that something? Isn’t that something?’”

Bush’s curiosity had been stirred by a number of Indian supporters living and prospering in Texas, including some businessmen who helped build the state’s high-tech corridor, dubbed Silicon Canyon. One of those businessmen was Durga Agrawal, born in Lakhanpur, a central Indian village without water or electricity, who had earned a master’s degree at the University of Houston and stayed on to found a highly successful company called Piping Technology & Products and to raise more than \$100,000 for the Bush presidential campaign in the local Indian community. After Bush became president, Agrawal was invited to the White

House as a guest at the banquet for visiting Indian prime minister Manmohan Singh, where Bush introduced him as “my good friend from Texas.”

Bush’s question to his Vulcans prompted Rice to include a highly significant paragraph in her January 2000 *Foreign Affairs* essay “Promoting the National Interest,” which was widely studied as the blueprint for a Bush administration foreign policy. She contended that China should be regarded as “a strategic competitor, not the ‘strategic partner’ the Clinton administration once called it,” and suggested that America should redirect its focus. The United States “should pay closer attention to India’s role in the regional balance. There is a strong tendency conceptually to connect India with Pakistan and to think only of Kashmir or the nuclear competition between the two states. But India is an element in China’s calculation, and it should be in America’s, too. India is not a great power yet, but it has the potential to emerge as one.”

The intervening September 11 terrorist attacks and the

Iraq war perhaps explain why it took five years for the Bush administration to act formally on that calculus. But on a March 2005 visit to India, Rice told Prime Minister Singh that part of the United States' foreign policy was to "help India become a major world power in the 21st century." At a later briefing, U.S. ambassador to India David Mulford described the vision behind a broader strategic relationship with India that would foster cooperation on a number of fronts. "The U.S.-India relationship is based on our shared common values. We are multiethnic democracies committed to the rule of law and freedom of speech and religion," Mulford said, adding that "there is no fundamental conflict or disagreement between the United States and India on any important regional or global issue."

A July 2005 visit by Prime Minister Singh to Washington, and President Bush's trip this year to New Delhi, along with detailed negotiations for nuclear, military, economic, and technological cooperation, have institutionalized that relationship. But, as former deputy secretary of state Strobe Talbott said of his own earlier path-breaking negotiations with foreign minister Jaswant Singh, "What took us so long?"

The short answer is the Cold War. American officials were uncomprehending and resentful of India's determination to stay neutral as a founder and pillar of the Non-Aligned Movement. By contrast, Pakistan swiftly decided to become an American ally and to buy American weapons. In response, India bought Soviet weapons. Pakistan, with whom India has fought three wars since the two countries simultaneously became independent from Britain in 1947, was also a close ally of China, so the Sino-Soviet split gave Soviet diplomats a strong incentive to cement their ties with India, deepening American suspicions.

India's explosion of a nuclear device (not a weapon, Indira Gandhi's government insisted) in 1974 exposed India to various restrictions in obtaining nuclear supplies under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and to some other mildly punitive but symbolic U.S. legislation. After India's full-scale nuclear weapons tests in 1998 (swiftly followed by rather less impressive tests by Pakistan), the Clinton administration sought engagement through the Talbott-Singh talks and Bill Clinton's own highly successful visit to India. When Pakistan-backed militants crossed Kashmir's mountains into the Indian-controlled area of Kargil, Clinton's intervention prevented the incursion from escalating into a full-scale war. The Bush administration had to launch

another panicked round of diplomacy in early 2002, after an attack on the Indian parliament by Kashmiri terrorists with apparent Pakistani connections. At one critical point, then-U.S. deputy secretary of state Richard Armitage asked his staff, "Who thinks they're heading for nuclear war?" and everyone except for Armitage reportedly raised a hand. One senior British official who was involved recalls it as the nearest thing to nuclear war since the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis.

Perhaps these brushes with disaster served as an awful warning to India. Or perhaps its successful market-style economic reforms in the 1990s, along with the palpable weakness of its old friends in Moscow, gave the country's leaders the spur and the self-confidence to rethink India's foreign policy. But there was a further goad: India's nervousness at the rapid growth of its Asian neighbor, China, by whom it had been humiliated in a brief border war in 1962. In May 1998, at the time of India's nuclear tests, Indian defense minister George Fernandes claimed that China was exploiting Pakistan, Burma, and Tibet in order to "encircle" India. "China has provided Pakistan with both missile as well as nuclear know-how," Fernandes said, adding, "China has its nuclear weapons stockpiled in Tibet right along our borders." He concluded that China was India's most severe threat, and that while India had pledged "no first use" of nuclear weapons, the Indian nuclear arsenal would be targeted appropriately.

With Pakistan to the west and China to the north and east, India has long feared encirclement. Despite soothing diplomatic statements, China has sharpened these fears with an assertive new presence in the Indian Ocean, beginning in the late 1990s with an electronic listening post in Myanmar's Coco Islands. In 2001, China agreed to help Pakistan build a new port and naval base at Gwadar, close to the Iranian border and the Persian Gulf. China has also pitched in to build a road network from the new port to the Karakoram Highway, a feat of engineering that connects China and Pakistan through the Himalayas. The Gwadar naval base planned to India's west is matched by another to the east, where Chinese engineers are building a similar facility on Myanmar's Arakan coast, connected by a new road and rail link through Myanmar to China's Yunnan Province. China is also helping Cambodia

build a rail link to the sea, and in Thailand, it is proposing to help fund a \$20 billion canal across the Kra Isthmus, which would allow ships to bypass the Strait of Malacca. A recent Pentagon report described these new bases as China's "string of pearls" to secure the sea routes to the vital oil fields of the Persian Gulf.

In a number of off-the-record conversations in New Delhi on the eve of Bush's visit earlier this year, including extremely rare meetings with senior officials of the secretive Research and Analysis Wing, Indian security and military figures stressed their profound concern at these developments. The degree of alarm is evident in India's recent flurry of arms purchases, including a \$3.5 billion deal to buy six Scorpene "stealth" submarines from France along with the technology to build more. The Scorpene will augment India's existing submarine fleet of 16 vessels, mainly Soviet-built Kilo and Fox-trot attack submarines. India was the world's biggest customer for arms last year, and more deals for advanced aircraft are in the works, which seem likely to include U.S.-made F-16 and F-18 warplanes, even as India builds its own family of nuclear-capable Agni missiles, the latest version of which is designed to reach Shanghai. With almost 1.4 million troops, India's armed forces are already roughly the same size as those of the United States, and they are increasingly well trained and well armed. India is so far the only Asian country with an aircraft carrier, which can deploy British-built Sea Harrier fighters, vertical-takeoff jets like those used by the U.S. Marines.

The alarm over China's rise is plain in India's military and policy debates. An article last year by the Indian Defense Ministry's Bhartendu Kumar Singh in the journal *Peace and Conflict*, published by the New Delhi-based Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, is typical. Singh speculated that China's military buildup might be explained in part by Taiwan, but that its long-term goal could be to ensure Chinese dominance of the Asia-Pacific region. While Singh doubted that this challenge would result in an all-out war between China and India, India was bound "to feel the effects of Chinese military confidence. . . . Is India prepared? It can wage and win a war

against Pakistan under every circumstance, but it is not sure about holding out against China."

The irony and the danger is that China has similar reasons to feel encircled. The United States has established new military bases in Central Asia since 9/11, adding to existing outposts in Japan and South Korea, and it is expanding its existing facilities at Guam to include a base for submarines and long-range stealth bombers. Now Beijing nervously watches the warming strategic partnership between Washington and New Delhi. Moreover, China's construction of the "string of pearls" reflects its own deep concern about the security of its oil supplies. Its

THE TENSION BETWEEN India and China, both rising powers, is underscored by their rivalry for essential energy sources.

tankers must pass through the Indian Ocean, and China's new pipeline from the Kazakh oil and gas fields of Central Asia will lie within easy cruise missile or air strike distance of India.

The tension between these two rising powers is underscored by their rivalry for essential energy resources. "India, panicked over future oil supply, went after international oil assets competing directly with China," *India Daily* reported last year when Subir Raha, chairman of India's Oil and Natural Gas Corporation, announced that the company was buying a fifth of Iran's giant Yadavaran oil field and was in the market to buy assets of Yukos, the Russian energy giant. The Indian company had already invested nearly \$2 billion to buy a share of the Sakhalin-1 field in Siberia, run by ExxonMobil. India, which imports more than two-thirds of its oil, has since signed a \$40 billion deal with Iran to import liquefied natural gas and join in developing three Iranian oil fields.

Energy geopolitics can promote harmony as well as rivalry. Pakistan and Turkmenistan have signed a memorandum of understanding on a multibillion-dollar gas pipeline through Afghanistan that could eventually end as a "Peace Pipeline" in India, in what would be a major breakthrough in Indo-Pakistani relations. Former Indian

petroleum minister Mani Shankar Aiyar, a strong advocate for the pipeline, says, "Almost everywhere in the world where an Indian goes in quest of energy, chances are that he will run into a Chinese engaged in the same hunt." Aiyar proposed that India, China, Japan, and South Korea establish a system of cooperative access to energy supplies. His subsequent demotion to minister for youth and sport was widely perceived in India as reflecting U.S. pressure against the Iran oil deal.

Indian security officials already see themselves fated to play central roles in what Aaron Friedberg, a Princeton scholar now on the White House national security staff, has called "the struggle for mastery in Asia." That phrase was the title of an essay he published in the neoconservative monthly *Commentary* when Bush was first elected. Friedberg's central message was that over the next several

over one billion includes 145 million Muslims.

It is in this context that the nuclear dimension of the Bush administration's embrace of India has aroused so much controversy. The administration seeks to steer India into "compliance" with the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) system while leaving India's nuclear weapons reactors out of the international control regime. This stance has been challenged by critics in the United States for driving a coach and horses through the Non-Proliferation Treaty just as international support for diplomatic pressure on Iran depends on strict compliance with it.

Under the deal, India will separate its civilian from its military nuclear programs, but it has until 2014 to complete this division. New Delhi will declare 14 of an expected total of 22 nuclear reactors to be for civilian use and place

them under IAEA controls. But India has managed to keep its new fast-breeder reactors out of the control system, which means that there will be no nuclear fuel shortages to constrain the future manufacture and development of nuclear weapons. Moreover, because India will reserve the right to determine which

INDIA IS NOW PLAYING tortoise to China's hare, not only in its rate of growth but also because the Indian and Chinese economies are two very different creatures.

decades the United States would likely find itself engaged in an "open and intense geopolitical rivalry" with China. "The combination of growing Chinese power, China's effort to expand its influence, and the unwillingness of the United States to entirely give way before it are the necessary preconditions of a 'struggle for mastery,'" he wrote, adding that hostilities or a military confrontation could be slow to develop or could occur as a result of a "single catalytic event, such as a showdown over Taiwan."

The strategic and energy concerns of the United States, China, and India will be difficult to manage. But Pakistan, Russia, Japan, and North and South Korea all factor into the extraordinarily complex equation of Asian security. (India maintains that Pakistan's missile technology came from China and North Korea.) And through Pakistan and the terrorist attacks from militants in Kashmir, India also feels itself threatened by Islamic extremism, a matter of grave concern for a country whose population of just

parts of its nuclear program will be subject to IAEA controls and which will not, it will be able to shield its own nuclear research labs from the IAEA system. New Delhi has also reinterpreted the U.S. insistence that the deal be made "in perpetuity" by making this conditional on continued supplies of enriched uranium, of which India is desperately short, to fuel its reactors.

The main concession India made was cosmetic. It agreed not to be formally included, in the eyes of the United States and the IAEA, in the category of the five recognized nuclear weapons states (the United States, Russia, Britain, France, and China). The deal is still the subject of hard bargaining in the U.S. Congress, where it has yet to be ratified, despite intense pressure from the Bush administration. But if, as expected, the agreement succeeds, India will become a special case, with a free hand to augment its nuclear weapons systems, and to develop its nuclear power stations with full access to the fuel and

technology monopolized by the 45-nation Nuclear Suppliers Group. And India will secure all this with the blessing of the IAEA, thus negating the efforts of the international community since the 1970s to constrain India's nuclear ambitions by putting sanctions on its access to nuclear fuel and technology.

In India, the agreement has come in for criticism for wedding the country to U.S. strategic interests, to the detriment of India's relations with China and Iran. The policy is also viewed by some Indians as a lever to steadily increase international control over India's nuclear assets, and to make it more dependent on the United States as the prime supplier of nuclear fuel.

India long saw itself as neutral and nonaligned, endowed by Gandhi's nonviolent legacy with a singular innocence of such geopolitical games. It has been thrust with remarkable speed into a prominent strategic role that matches its new economic robustness. But its ability to sustain military power and buy advanced weaponry will clearly depend on its economic growth, which began in earnest 15 years after

China launched its own economic reforms. While India 30 years ago enjoyed a slightly higher per capita income than China, today it has an annual per capita income (at purchasing power parity) of \$3,300, not quite half of China's level of \$6,800, and less than one-tenth of the \$41,800 level of the United States.

India is now playing the tortoise to China's hare, not only in its rate of growth but also because the Indian and Chinese economies are two very different creatures. China has become the world's low-cost manufacturing center, making and assembling components that are often designed or developed elsewhere, and relying heavily on foreign investment. India's boom, by contrast, has so far been largely based on services and software, and it has been self-financing, with about a tenth of China's level of foreign direct investment. Still, it has produced an Indian middle class—usually defined by the ability to buy a private car—of some 300 million people, a number greater than the entire population of the United States.

One central reason why India has not enjoyed a Chinese-style boom led by manufacturing is the dismal



The vast slums around Mumbai's international airport testify to the poverty that still afflicts India. Yet because they have the vote (unlike China's poor), the Mumbai squatters have for years prevented badly needed airport improvements, while winning jobs and neighborhood improvements from the government.



The Indian military struts its considerable stuff every year on January 26, India's Republic Day. On display here is the country's first indigenously developed ballistic missile, the short-range Prithvi (Earth), which debuted in 1988. Newer missiles are capable of being nuclear armed and striking China.

state of so much of the country's infrastructure. Its ports, railroads, highways, electricity supplies, and grid systems are aged and ramshackle, and traffic jams and power outages are routine, reinforcing each other when the traffic lights blink out. Critical segments of the economy—such as the container transport system, which allows easy shipping of freight by land, sea, and air—have been state monopolies, subject to the usual debilitating problems of the breed. Arriving foreigners receive a startling introduction to the bustle and backwardness of India before they ever reach a hotel. On my most recent trip to New Delhi and Jaipur, the maddening endemic traffic jams included bicycles, flimsy three-wheeled rickshaws, and somnolent cows, whose excrement was swiftly scooped up by hordes of small children and patted into flat, plate-shaped discs, which are dried in the sun and sold for fuel. So to the usual tourist dangers of stomach upsets from eating local foods is added the prospect of respiratory infection from breathing air suffused with fecal matter.

Yet there is no denying the furious commercial energy of a country that is currently signing up five million new mobile phone subscribers each month. Competition has come to the container industry, the airports are being privatized despite labor union opposition, and new highways are being built. The gas and electricity grids are slated for reform next. India has its high-tech centers of Bangalore and Hyderabad, as well as a few new towns such as Gurgaon, just outside Delhi, with a modern automaking plant, high-rise shopping malls, and telemarketing centers. But it can boast nothing like the jaw-dropping array of new skyscrapers that zigzag the skylines of modern Shanghai and Guangdong.

Still, some of the smart money is on the tortoise. The global consultancy firm PwC (still better known by its old name, Price Waterhouse Coopers) produced a report this year forecasting that India would have the fastest growth among all the major economies over the next 50 years, averaging 7.6 percent annually in dollar terms. In 50 years' time, the Indian and U.S. economies would be

roughly equivalent in size. The report also suggested that by 2050 the existing economies of the G-7 group of advanced industrial nations (the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and Canada) would be overtaken by the E-7 emergent economies of China, India, Brazil, Russia, Indonesia, Mexico, and Turkey.

The most significant difference between India and China, however, may be how their respective demographic trends and political systems shape their futures. The Chinese leadership is already coming to regret its nearly 30-year-old policy of permitting most couples to have only one child. Now China is rapidly aging and heading for a pensions crisis, as an entire generation of only children grapples with the problem of helping to support two parents and four grandparents. A recent DeutscheBank survey on China's pension challenge predicted, "China is going to get old before it gets rich."

The policy has also created a serious gender disparity. The ability to predict the sex of a fetus in a country limited to one child per family has led to a situation in which 120 boys are born for every 100 girls, and President Hu Jintao last year asked a task force of scientists and officials to address the tricky problems posed by an excess of single men. India has a similar sex disparity problem in certain regions, notably those where Sikhs are numerous, but overall, with half of its population below the age of 25, it boasts a far healthier demographic profile.

The contest between the Indian tortoise and the Chinese hare has a political dimension as well. India is a democracy, without an equivalent of China's ruling Communist Party. Its elections, provincial governments, and free news media give the country great social resilience. China's breakneck economic growth and social disruption seem likely to have potent consequences as its new middle class finds a political voice.

The Chinese Communist Party is becoming less ideological and far more technocratic in its orientation, but it still can manipulate the most authoritarian levers

of state power in aggressive pursuit of economic and strategic goals. Indians are stuck with their messy but comfortable democracy. Montek Singh Ahluwalia, an Oxford-educated economist who is deputy chairman of the national planning commission, says, "The biggest thing about India is that it's a very participative, very pluralistic, open democracy where even if the top 1,000 people technocratically came to the conclusion something is good, it has to be mediated into a political consensus. And I'm being realistic. I don't think it's going to be that easy to put in place everything that from a techno-

THERE IS NO DENYING the furious commercial energy of a country that is currently signing up five million new mobile phone subscribers each month.

cratic point of view everybody knows needs to be done."

In short, India's pluralism could be to China's advantage, although given the track record of bureaucratic technocrats from Moscow to Japan in wasting massive resources to pursue the wrong goals, it may not be that simple. But India has its own special asset, recognized by the American presidential candidate George W. Bush and suggested by the celebrated prediction a century ago by Otto von Bismarck that "the most important fact of the 20th century will be that the English and the Americans speak the same language." The most important factor in the 21st century may well be that Americans and Indians (and perhaps Britons and Australians and Microsoft employees and global businesspeople) all speak English. This is not simply a matter of a shared language, although that is important; it also encompasses those other aspects of the common heritage that include free speech and free press, trial by jury and an independent judiciary, private property, and individual as well as human rights. While retaining its rich and historic cultures, India is thoroughly familiar with these core values and determinants of the American civic system. And as a religiously tolerant, multi-ethnic democracy with commercial, legal, and educa-

tional systems developed during the British Raj, India is—like the English language itself—familiar and reassuring to Americans.

A decisive factor in the short term may be India's importance to the United States in the strategic and cultural campaign now being waged against Islamic extremism. This will be a struggle much deeper and longer than the mainly military effort the Bush administration calls GWOT (Global War on Terrorism), as currently being fought in Afghanistan and Iraq. India, itself a regular target, has been from the beginning a firm partner in the war on terrorism, instantly offering flyover and landing rights to U.S. aircraft engaged in the war against the Taliban. But with its 145 million Muslims, India risks becoming embroiled in the tumult now shaking so much of the Islamic world as the faithful try simultaneously to grapple with the cultural, theological, economic, and social revolutions now under way.

Facing the additional problem of militant Hindu nationalism, India has no choice but to stand in the front line against Islamic extremism. India is the great geographic obstruction to an Islamic arc that would stretch from Morocco across Africa and the Middle East all the way to Malaysia, Indonesia, and into the Philippines. Pakistan and Bangladesh are deeply uncomfortable neighbors for India, being Muslim, poor, the scenes of concerted jihadist campaigns, and worrisomely close to becoming failed states. But there is another arc, which stretches from Japan and South Korea through China and the increasingly prosperous countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to India. This swath of rising prosperity and economic growth now includes three billion people—half the world's population. It is easy to foresee wretched outliers such as North Korea, Myanmar, Bangladesh, and Pakistan being swept up in the wake of this boom, should it continue, but for that to happen, Asia needs stability, peace, and a cessation of arms races.

It is an open question whether the burgeoning new strategic friendship of India and the United States will help this process or derail it. It could do both, deterring China from adventurism or bullying its neighbors, and stabilizing the strategic environment while India and China manage a joint and peaceful rise to

wealth and status. But at the same time, the new U.S.-Indian accord could help spur a new nuclear arms race in Asia, where Russia, China, India, Pakistan, and probably North Korea already have the bomb, and Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan have the technological capability to build it quickly. One wild card is already being played that could bring this about: the prospect of Japan and India sharing in American antimissile technology. If India gains the ability to shoot down incoming missiles, this threatens to negate the deterrent that Pakistan and China thought they possessed against India, with potentially destabilizing results.

Even though India's prospects now look brighter than they have for a generation, the country faces some sobering challenges, including the accelerating pace of expectations among its own people and their understandable demand that the new wealth be shared quickly, that the poorest villages get schools and electricity. Almost half the population still lives in rural hamlets, and only 44 percent of these rural residents have electricity. Enemies of globalization populate the Indian Left and sit in the current coalition government. India must grapple with the familiar difficulties of Hindu nationalism, inadequate infrastructure, and a large Muslim population, as well as environmental crisis, deep rural poverty, and the caste system.

India finds itself in a delicate position. It must manage and maintain its relationship with China while accommodating American strategists who are relying on its support to keep Asia on the rails of democratic globalization. Americans also regard India as insurance against China's domination of Asia to the exclusion of the United States. India, on the other hand, wants freedom of action and does not want to serve merely as a tool of American influence.

"We want the United States to remain as the main stabilizer in Asia and the balance against China until such time as India can manage the job on its own," an influential security adviser to the Indian government said recently, very much on background. What will happen once India believes it can do this alone? I asked. "Well, then we shall see," he replied. "By then it will be a different Asia, probably a different China, and possibly a different America. It will certainly be a different world, dominated by the Indian, Chinese, and American superpowers."■

Who's in Charge Here?

The 20th century taught us that repressed desires are the source of human unhappiness. Now, with more possibilities for pleasure and fewer rules and constraints than ever before, the happy few will be those able to exercise self-control.



BY DANIEL AKST

MOST OF US WHO LIVE WITH CHILDREN AND computers know about software for controlling how the former use the latter. But what about the grownups who can't control themselves? For adult Internet users ready to admit that they're in the grip of a higher power, there is Covenant Eyes, a website that will keep track of all the other websites you visit—and e-mail this potentially incriminating list to an “accountability partner” of your choosing. Covenant Eyes even rates websites on a kind of taboo scale (the higher the score, the raunchier), so that your spouse or pastor can tell at a glance whether you've been poring over market research online or taking in a peepshow.

The existence of Covenant Eyes is a measure of just

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how hard it can be to control ourselves nowadays in a landscape of boundless temptation. Thanks to rising affluence, loosening social constraints, and the inexorable march of technology, most of us have more opportunities to overindulge than ever before. Life in modern Western cultures is like living at a giant all-you-can-eat buffet offering more calories, credit, sex, intoxicants, and just about anything else one could take to excess than our forebears might ever have imagined.

America is the biggest buffet of all, of course, and we invented the Internet to supply home delivery. Pornography, for example, once accompanied by shame and inconvenience, is now instantly and anonymously accessible to anyone with an Internet-connected computer at no charge whatsoever. Or how about gambling? In 1970 casino gambling was legal only in Nevada, while New

Hampshire, New Jersey, and New York were the only states with lotteries. Today the picture is almost entirely reversed, with 47 states having legalized casinos or lotteries, or both. And if near-ubiquity still isn't convenient enough, the Internet entices with offshore "virtual" casinos accessible from the comfort of home.

While temptations have multiplied like fast-food outlets in the suburbs, the superstructure of external restraint that once helped check our impulses has been seriously eroded, in part by the same inexorably subversive force—capitalism—that has given us the wherewithal to indulge. Oh, we're tougher on drunk driving and there's social pressure not to smoke, but as the social historian Peter Stearns writes, "The adjustments that

**AMERICA IS THE BIGGEST BUFFET
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produced the 20th-century style of self-restraint have, on the whole, reduced protective arrangements and behavior laws, placing more responsibility on the individual for knowing and following the rules."

Stigma, the ugly form of social shame that once helped keep so many of us in line, has withered like a cold soufflé. Drug and alcohol abuse, while not exactly applauded, are seen as medical afflictions rather than moral shortcomings, and while adultery may be frowned upon it is also understood, very often, as a painful part of the search for self-realization. (The same can be said of adultery's frequent offspring, divorce.) Financial constraints, meanwhile, once a ready substitute for willpower, have been swept away by surging affluence and the remarkable openhandedness of lenders. Last year alone Americans received five billion credit card solicitations in the mail; given the barrage of products (and product advertising) on offer everywhere we look, it's no wonder that so many of us decide to sign on the dotted line, with predictable consequences for our indebtedness and personal savings.

Few of these phenomena are uniquely American, even if we do tend to be the pioneers in most areas of

self-gratification. Scarcity is falling away in China and India as it did long ago in North America and Europe, where bounty has led companies to exquisite refinements in the art and science of selling—in exploiting taste, color, sound, and even smell to overcome consumer resistance. Nor is the family, that other traditional brake on behavior, anything like the force it once was, here or elsewhere. In the world's most affluent nations, the family's role has evolved from one of economic production to emotional satisfaction, transforming its inherent bias from discipline to indulgence. And families are less likely nowadays to be intact or extended. The willingness of adult offspring to move far away from parents—and vice versa, when retirement comes—has weakened ties that once circumscribed behavior much more tightly.

At the same time, the eyes of neighbors are no longer upon us. Despite a good deal of hand-wringing over electronic-data security, the fact is that

most of us enjoy an unprecedented degree of personal physical privacy. Those who live alone—and their numbers are growing—are especially free to do, watch, or eat pretty much any darned thing they please, but the rest of us are a long way from the in-home surveillance of 1984 as well. Freestanding houses in sprawling suburbs—and the universality of motor vehicle travel—mean that, for the most part, nobody has any idea when you come and go, what your destination is, or what you do when you get there. A scarlet letter today would have to go on your license plate.

Then again, what civil or religious authority today could impose such a mark? In the non-Islamic world, at least, church and ideology no longer provide much in the way of traditional limits on individual behavior. Communism, with its tyrannies large and small, is dead, and as a character in a Donald Barthelme story once remarked, opium is now the opiate of the people. Amen, let us hasten to add. Who wants someone else to tell us what to do? Covenant Eyes, after all, is something we can only impose on ourselves. And though lots of people are ready to criticize affluence, nobody I know truly craves the opposite.



The hypnotic allure of slot machines is captured by Charles Bell's photorealist painting *Rol-a-Top* (1981).

Events have conspired, then, to force each of us to rely more on himself or herself for the kind of restraint that was once imposed, or at least sternly reinforced, externally back in the bad old days. And there are real doubts whether the modern self is up to the job. “Self-regulation failure is the major social pathology of the present time,” say psychologists Roy F. Baumeister, Todd F. Heatherton, and Dianne M. Tice, who explore the subject in their book *Losing Control: How and Why People Fail at Self-Regulation* (1994). They add that “all over the country, people are miserable because they cannot control their money, their weight, their emotions, their drinking, their hostility, their craving for drugs, their spending, their own behavior vis-à-vis their family members, their sexual impulses, and more.”

Humanity's worldwide struggle with its weight is perhaps the quintessential example of self-restraint under stress. Americans have been gaining weight roughly since the introduction of the microwave oven, as the price of calo-

ries, both in dollars and preparation time, has fallen to perhaps the lowest level since Adam and Eve left the Garden of Eden. But these changes have not been matched by increases in willpower, with the result that roughly two-thirds of us weigh more than we should. Obesity is now a growing problem, if you'll pardon the expression, in countries all over the world.

Technology has only stoked temptation. Forget the Internet for a while; just think about the world without the birth control pill. Television is yet another skilled crusher of restraint, not just through the power of advertising but also by exposing people everywhere to levels of affluence, sexual license, and other forms of personal freedom they couldn't readily visualize before. Tevye's fantasies of wealth in *Fiddler on the Roof* included time to study the sages, but he never watched *The O.C.*, whose vision of sunshine, sex, and intrigue does not figure heavily in the Talmud.

As the structures of constraint come tumbling down, the ability to control ourselves will play an ever more

important role in our happiness. Already, that role is large. A little self-restraint can greatly reduce your chance of developing heart disease and lung cancer. If you are a man, it can preserve your marriage (a strong predictor of marital stability is the husband's ability to control his wandering impulses). And if you are a student, it can lead to higher lifelong earnings, since you are likely to do better—and go further—in school. The psychologists Angela Duckworth and Martin Seligman, in fact, found in studying middle-school students that self-discipline (as rated by parents and teachers and derived from the students' own questionnaire responses) was a much better predictor of academic performance than IQ. It's worth bearing in mind, at this juncture, that education is correlated not just with income but with longevity.

The marketplace has already delivered its verdict, lavishing huge incomes on society's scary new self-control elite, those "resumé gods" who seem to excel at both self-restraint (the ability to resist) and its more vigorous cousin self-discipline (the ability to persist). Not only did these lords of discipline withstand all those boring texts in graduate school, but they keep themselves thin by carefully regulating what they eat after flogging themselves off to the gym at the crack of dawn. We all know who these people are: They're the ones who schedule their children's perfectly calibrated mix of mental and physical exertions with minute-by-minute precision, all the while plotting little Taylor's path from preschool to Harvard.

The postrestraint era leaves us not only to control ourselves, but to ask, self-control for what? What larger purpose, if any, should our self-regulation serve? The answer may be that self-restraint not only benefits each of us, but all of us. It's easy to make fun of the resumé gods and the choices they have made, for instance, but these folks don't seem to be doing badly to me, at least compared to us self-control hoi polloi frantically rolling over our credit card balances and ordering the fried cheesecake whenever we see it on a menu. On the contrary, America's aristocracy of self-control seems ideally adapted to the world in which we find ourselves, blast their steely backbones. It's as if they got the news ahead of the rest of us—no doubt by waking up earlier—that self-control may well be the most important personal trait of the 21st century.

For a people conditioned by the popular belief that suppressing our innermost desires is the surest path to mis-

ery, this may come as a bitter pill. Happiness, after all, is often held to require letting go, giving in, indulging, rather than remaining in thrall to those terrible inhibitions by which we thwart our own fun. So we drink bourbon, smoke marijuana, undergo primal scream therapy, ask our lovers to tie us up, all to free ourselves from . . . ourselves. "We long for a holiday from our frontal lobes, a Dionysiac fiesta of sense and impulse," writes Oliver Sachs. "That this is a need of our constrained, civilized, hyperfrontal nature has been recognized in every time and culture."

Yet if self-control appears to be in decline across the board, there are areas where it has increased, suggesting something like a law of conservation of self-regulation. There may only be so much to go around, in other words, and right now we'd rather use it to quit smoking than to lose weight. Consider how much self-control the average person expends navigating the modern workplace. At the office we are expected to regulate our attire, our attitudes, and our outbursts, smile at customers, refrain from off-color remarks, remain awake despite every postprandial impulse to the contrary, and produce urine free of illegal narcotics whenever it might be demanded. If factory jobs threatened to make us into physical automata, at least "they impinged less on personality styles than did the keep-smiling injunctions of sales gurus like Dale Carnegie or the efforts to mollify anger ranging from foreman-retraining programs in the 1930s to Total Quality Management schemes in the 1990s," Peter Stearns observes. "In sum, significant portions of most workdays are now marked by levels of emotional restraint not widely attempted in the 19th century."

Our struggle to control ourselves dates back much further than that—at least as far back as Odysseus, who commanded his sailors to lash him to his ship's mast and plug their ears lest he (and they) succumb to the seductive song of the Sirens. To the Greeks, the familiar problem was *acrasia*, a lack of control or self-command. Plato went back and forth on this, ultimately holding that people may judge badly what is best but can't really act against their own will, a view that left later philosophers unpersuaded. E. J. Lemmon, for instance, argued in 1962 that "it is so notorious a fact about human agents that they are often subject to *acrasia* that any ethical position that makes this

seem queer or paradoxical is automatically suspect for just this reason. Of Socrates we can say that as a plain matter of fact he was just wrong—acrasia does occur, or in Aristotle's phrase, knowledge just is, however sad this may be, frequently dragged about by desire."

To the early Christians, self-control was a religious issue. "I do not do what I would like to do," Paul laments in his letter to the Romans, "but instead I do what I hate . . . so I am not really the one who does this thing; rather it is the sin that lives in me." Self-control later became a problem for Augustine, the influential church thinker who, lacking the outlet offered to later repenters by Oprah Winfrey, chronicled his struggle with his own impure impulses in his *Confessions*. To modern Americans, heirs to strong traditions of moralizing on the one hand and philosophical pragmatism on the other, a lack of self-control is a personal failing. We expect people to exercise willpower, perhaps recognizing that society would fall apart if we didn't. But the nature of willpower makes this conclusion troublesome for philosophers. Justin Gosling, in a slender volume called *Weakness of the Will* (1990), puts the point succinctly: "If I am physically too weak to lift a weight, it is not my fault if I fail; so why does the same not hold if I am too weak of will, suffering, as it were, from debility of spiritual muscle?" Where, in other words, is the moral shortcoming in bad muscle tone?

And what if poor willpower is hereditary? There is evidence for this. Research has shown that addictions to gambling and alcohol, for example, have a strong hereditary component, although environment matters too, of course. (*The Harvard Mental Health Letter* reports that the rate of problem gambling is higher among people living within 50 miles of casinos.) Certainly there is a physical dimension to all this, which we know from cases of brain injury: Deliberation and self-control are activities of the prefrontal area of the brain, for whose size, shape, and (probably) powers none of us bears much personal responsibility. Indeed, some psychologists have argued that nobody really has *any* self-control, because consciousness itself is just an automated physical process.

Anyone who has ever spent a sleepless night can attest to how little control we have over our own thoughts, never mind our own actions, and skeptics can easily prove this for themselves by following the example of Leo Tolstoy's brother, who challenged the future novelist to stand in a corner until he could no longer think of a white bear. Later researchers have found that asking people not to think about a white bear (or its equivalent) does in fact make it hard to get the creature out of their heads. Forbidding a topic can even make it more appealing; in one experiment, subjects told *not* to think about sex had higher levels of skin conductance—they sweated more—than those who were told to think about sex. Apparently, in the suppressors, renewed excitement occurred every time sex popped involuntarily to mind.

All this notwithstanding, lots of people still contend that self-mastery is within our capabilities—and that we ought to

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have the self-discipline to instill it in our children. Roy Baumeister has derided the recent focus on self-esteem in American families and classrooms, arguing that an emphasis on self-control instead will produce accomplishments that not only shore up self-esteem but also lead to success in life.

This viewpoint is hardly new, even if it has become uncommon outside a certain class of professional scolds who, sooner or later, turn out to be playing games with prescriptions or playing high-stakes roulette in Vegas. No less than William James (Henry's smarter brother) urged us to "keep the faculty of effort alive in you by a little gratuitous exercise every day . . . so that, when the hour of dire need draws nigh, it may find you not unnerved or untrained to stand the test."

Even in James's day, psychologists suspected that self-control had an address. In the late 19th century, the Englishman John Hughlings Jackson suggested a three-part



Impossible to resist?

cerebral hierarchy corresponding to different evolutionary levels, and that the job of the highest part was essentially to keep down the lower. Sigmund Freud, with his Jacksonian notion of the superego riding herd over some drooling and libidinous id, was the psychologist with perhaps the greatest impact on our thinking about self-control. To Freud—a man of considerable will who was no stranger to cocaine and tobacco—self-control was the price of civilization, and the human tragedy was that we can only live in society by subjecting ourselves to some serious psychological constraints—which are themselves the cause of our individual unhappiness.

Although absent from the rogues' gallery at your local post office, repression was soon recognized as a significant public enemy. In the 19th century, literary characters such as Anna Karenina, Emma Bovary, and George Hurstwood got into trouble by failing to control themselves, but in 20th-century novels such as Anne Tyler's *Accidental Tourist*, self-control was more often itself the cause of unhappiness, or at the very least a symptom of something deeply amiss. This brave new emphasis on cutting

loose is reflected across the arts in the very shape of new works, now constrained by fewer of the formal requirements that once prevailed in, say, poetry and painting. John Elster, who wrestles with self-constraint and its advantages in such works as *Ulysses Unbound*, cites Henri Peyre's observation from the 1940s: "After a long century of individualism, many of our contemporaries seem to be overweighted by their absolute artistic freedom which has rendered any revolt insipid."

Self-control met its Waterloo in the 1960s. The emphasis in those days was on escaping not just the tyranny of capitalist-inflected *social* control, but also aspects of *self*-control that seemed equally imposed and unjustifiable.

The youth culture's embrace of consciousness-altering drugs can be seen as an attempt to internalize this broader revolution, a turn to pharmacology for help in overthrowing a superego so insidiously effective we might not even be aware of its string pulling and suppressions, so familiar and even comfortable were its constraints. The interest in Eastern mysticism, meditation, free love, and other means of getting over and around ourselves—in letting it all hang out—was part of the same revolutionary upheaval undertaken by individuals working hard to get out of their own grip.

This whole free-spirited project has lost much of its charm, at least outside Hollywood, where repressed movie characters still haunt central casting waiting to be opened up to life by freewheeling buddies and appealingly daffy love interests. In real life, feminists demand that men control themselves in the workplace as well as on dates. Parents demand that boys do likewise, employing pharmacology to impose constraints rather than subvert them. "Zero tolerance" policies for all sorts of transgressions have given us the spectacle of a kindergartener punished for a

peck on a fellow pupil's cheek—and have sent the message that even the tiniest of us better exercise more self-control.

Of course, these new social restrictions are low fences compared to the heights of freedom all those social changes have given us. Feminism has placed a greater burden of self-control on women, with more failures of self-regulation one predictable result. By 1987, lung cancer—mostly from smoking—had surpassed breast cancer to become women's leading cause of cancer death. Women are gambling more, and having more problems with gambling. The end (or at least the erosion) of the traditional double standard about sex has lifted a major constraint, with costs as well as benefits for women and men alike.

In the absence of such external restraints, we get to choose our own, which brings us back to *Covenant Eyes*. That particular website, like Odysseus' orders to his men, is a classic example of what is known among the cognoscenti of self-restraint as “precommitment,” and examples of such self-imposed outside constraints abound once you start looking for them. Most of us engage in precommitment sooner or later. We may avoid having ice cream in the house, for example, to help keep our weight down (if we had some, we'd eat it). If that doesn't work, we might get our jaws wired shut or our stomachs surgically reduced. If drinking is the problem, we may take medication that causes vomiting and other unpleasantness in those who consume alcohol. Isn't marriage a kind of precommitment as well? Why else would one need to wrap romance in a legal contract if not to guard against the day when fidelity might waver? Louisiana even offers something called “covenant marriage,” which is harder to get out of than the regular kind.

To understand human behavior in this arena, it can be useful to think of our selves as different and at times dissenting individuals. The economist Tyler Cowen has suggested that we all harbor two contemporaneous selves, one impulsive and the other rules-oriented, but others have proposed an infinite number of selves stretching off into the future, all of them subject to costs and constraints we might impose today. Obviously our desires are not consistent across time, which is why we might do something tonight that we'll hate ourselves for in the morning. When precommitment occurs, one's present self is typically the prudent one. Thus, Odysseus' careful current self

demanded that his raving future self be restrained. Similarly, Cowen notes that Victor Hugo reportedly worked in the nude, having instructed his valet to withhold his clothing lest he go off somewhere instead of staying inside to work. And John Elster reminds us that Samuel Taylor Coleridge, in Thomas De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*, hired men to forcibly prevent him from going into drug dens. “But,” De Quincey wrote, “as the authority for stopping him was derived simply from himself, naturally these poor men found themselves in a metaphysical fix.”

If self-restraint is hard for people such as Hugo, it's even harder for whole societies. Is it any wonder that greenhouse gas emissions and government deficits are a problem in most of the advanced industrial economies? This is why societies engage in precommitment as well. The Constitution is a good example: It can be seen as a form of precommitment in which the nation's earliest electorate bound itself, its leaders, and all those to come against the infringement of individual rights and undue concentration of power. The Social Security system is a collective form of precommitment against individual financial imprudence; think of it as a government mandated Christmas club, whereby you let Uncle Sam take your money now and use it without paying interest, all so you can be sure to have something when you really need it later.

In a sense, the crux of the self-control problem is the future and how much regard we have for it. Today the future looks scary, in part because we are so lax—about warming the planet with fossil fuels, increasing national debt, and countless other issues. But if we can do better, we should also remember that things could be much worse. That technology helped get us into this mess means that it may well have the power to get us out. Can the time be far off when pills permit us to eat almost anything without gaining weight? What about when we're finally able to manipulate the genes of our offspring? Will we engineer superhuman self-control? And will the law punish those who don't possess it?

Meanwhile, let's look on the bright side. That self-control may be the most significant challenge faced by many of the world's people in the 21st century is a blessing in not much of a disguise. Self-regulation is a challenge, but one not nearly so daunting as the poverty and tyranny that are its most effective substitutes. ■



What's New

BY JAMES MORRIS

Novelty beckons Americans as never before. As the wreckage of our headlong race for the next new thing recedes in the rearview mirror, will we remember what we've lost?

NOTHING NEW WAS ONCE THE NORM. THINK OF how many centuries our ancestors lived out their lives in circumstances that changed not at all from cradle to grave—that cycled through the seasons untouched by material advance or technological invention, following patterns that seemed beyond alteration. If they'd had clocks, it wouldn't have mattered whether the hands moved. The exacting second hand on a modern clock and those ubiquitous digital displays, with a colon sometimes pulsing the seconds between hours and minutes, locate us in every moment. We expect time to go not in a circle but like an arrow; if it lands in unfamiliar terrain, so much the better. We're suckers for the new, and “putting things behind us,” whether the things be lovers, careers, addresses, attitudes, fashions, gadgets, or disasters, is our norm.

Several years ago, in one of those Southern California beach communities where everyone is 24 and in perpetual motion so as to live forever, I took a wrong turn looking for a Coke. I entered a sumptuous big-box-store-sized market, where the fruits and vegetables, gently misted and more fully documented than millions of the nation's residents, were a lot better off than they had been outdoors. Olives had a



mammoth circular display table of their own, yogurts a separate wing; affidavits from coddled cows were available on request, and armed clerks kept watch at the door for the rogue chemical additive and, apparently, the Coke truck. On my way out I asked a young clerk, "Is this place new?" An inane question, because the brightly lit answer was all around me. Or so I thought. "New?" he echoed, giving me the look of benign exasperation that is youth's frequent judgment on age's confusion. "No," he said. "It's been here since January." We spoke in March.

You don't go to a grocery store for signs and wonders, but I couldn't help but wonder whether the precise clerk had given me a sign. Was his way of measuring time peculiar to Californians (there have always been rumors on this coast of an alien world on the other), or did he speak for multitudes? How long had it been before the novelty of the produce palace wore off for him? A week? A weekend? The blithe Californian had come by an alternative route to pretty much the same conclusion as the dour voice in Ecclesiastes: "There is no new thing under the sun. Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new?" That glum fellow (who was, after all, writing a chunk of the *Old Testament*)

had his eye on eternal grand cycles of life and death, achievement and loss. He was a big-picture kind of guy, unswayed by the here-and-gone particulars. I think that, for my young Californian, life was still mostly about the particulars, and of them there was an infinite, cascading supply, each swept from its brief prominence by the one rushing up fast behind. Given a chance, the clerk might have come to a reasonable accommodation with his ancient soul mate: "Dude, there is no new thing under the sun *for long*."

When I first heard the words "That's so 20th century," spoken five years into this century by a friend's teenage daughter, I tried to put the best face on them. At least she was aware that there had been a 20th century, and her verdict hinted at some familiarity with its defining characteristics. Alas, she wasn't situating the Great Leap Forward. In an "old" movie on TV, a female character had just negotiated a doorway in a shoulder-padded 1980s power suit. When I commented that the fashion was, technically, only "so 1980s and so 1940s," she laughed. "You know what I mean. It's all ancient history."

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For adults of a certain age and disposition, the 20th is *still* the century, even after the demarcation of 9/11. Though past, it's present, and relaxing our grip on it, and its on us, does not come easy. It's the vast warehouse from which we routinely retrieve our instances of what's foolish and wise, shaming and ennobling, cause for despair and reason to hope. Yet the century has no hold at all on the young. How could it? They reckon time by other clocks. But so, increasingly, do we all. Indeed, the relentless encroachment of the new on our lives—our insistence on it, our adjustment to it—renovates us too. We're new, but maybe not improved.

Of course, there's new and there's new. Newness was sunk into this country with its European foundation supports. In the New World were New Spain, and New Netherland, and New France, and New England, and they were just the beginning. An atlas today shows the astonishing number of locations, large and small, scattered across America that have appended newness to their identities. The New World was a vast staging ground for trial and error, a place of risky, limitless potential. And that defining characteristic of the nation must never be lost—the new that's against stagnation, the new that won't put up with setback, the new that enables medical, scientific, and technological advance and farsighted social policy, the new that says “go west” even when “west” is only a metaphor and the frontier a cloud bank. With that invigorating newness let there be no quarrel. But not everything new resuscitates.

We've come to expect a regular dose of novelty in our

lives—in what we eat and wear, in how we're impressed or amused or provoked or healed. The new is a defibrillator to jolt our flagging selves. “But wait,” comes the objection. “Hasn't that always been so, at a level commensurate with the ability of each age to meet the demand?” Yes, it has. But what's new is the intensity of our expectations and their elevation to entitlement, the proliferation of outlets for satisfying what have become our proliferating needs, and the capacity of so many people to afford to indulge them. What's new is the rapidity with which the new becomes old. We spin through fads and passions as rapidly as tornadoes lift, sustain, and drop the contents of a landscape. What's new is the seemingly infinite upward spiral of American abundance (though not—never—an abundance for all), a stairway not just to heaven but to the emptiness beyond.

What's new is the degree of agitation in normal lives. There's so much less relaxing into anything or luxuriating in the traditional and settled—indeed, so little tolerance for letting things become traditional and settled. Seventy years ago, that so-20th-century Thomas Stearns Eliot wrote a line in the poem “Burnt Norton” that could be our new national motto: “distracted from distraction by distraction.” Our heads are full of noise, and it's not just metaphorical. We're weaning ourselves away from interior silence as if its source were a poisoned spring. The majestic, brooding eagle has been routed by the jittery hummingbird. We're up and doing before the task at hand is down and done. Attention deficit disorder could be the mascot malady for the national

mood. But it faces a scrappy new challenger: restless legs syndrome. The TV ads hawking a drug to tame the willful extremities make a point of reassuring skeptics that the syndrome is “a recognized medical condition,” affecting millions. It's also the perfect external enactment of an inner impatience.

Fewer and fewer of us remember a time before abundance. Those who do need no convincing that abundance beats want. But when does so much of so much become too much of



In the wireless world, remote engagements are the rule.

too much? There's no limit to the previously unsuspected needs of which we're daily made aware. If we can take or leave the excess, shed it like a false friend in narrowed circumstances, no harm is done. But if the excess clings to us like a second skin, if no description of us that omits it is complete, the new selves we've exchanged for old are no bargain. We've bartered Manhattan for trinkets.

An extraordinary proliferation of almost everything, even genders, has become the norm. The trivial paraphernalia that clutter our lives and are continually replaced—upgraded, we like to think—alter us as surely as we're changed by the real historic advances from, say, gaslight to electric bulb, wagon to car, calculator to computer, prayer to vaccine. We come to take as our due things that start out as luxuries and frivolities. We swim daily through a Sargasso Sea of stuff. Random examples are so many and so commonplace that they fall below the register of our notice: paper towels with motifs, and trash bags with texture; water that costs more than milk; the rows of cheeses flaunting their age and breads flaunting their youth that are now available in even the least super of markets; the wild profusion of Dockers, which multiply like pet projects in a congressional budget.

So we rise to new levels of expectation, and the elevation is both wonderful and unsettling—the latter literally so, because we're dislodged from the fixed states we once found acceptable, as if “increase of appetite had grown/By what it fed on.” That's Hamlet on his mother's lust, but it nails our little lusts too. To be fair, Shakespeare can also bolster a counterargument, as when addled old King Lear tells his niggling daughters, “Allow not nature more than nature needs./Man's life is cheap as beast's.”

But Lear did not live to see a \$15,000 Sub-Zero refrigerator.

The upscale contemporary kitchens to which many now aspire are dominated by refrigerators, big and stainless-steel enough to qualify as morgue annexes, and great gas stoves, flaunting their cockpit-class control panels and shooting flames of lagoonish blue from battalions of burners. Granite and marble weigh upon the kitchens' sprawling counters and the island in their midst. When too many kitchens have an island, the new norm will be an archipelago.

A bathroom indoors rather than out, with water that ran hot and cold and a toilet that flushed, was once a new thing, and it was plainly better than the alternative. But how

much better need a bathroom be? Caracalla himself could have learned from the builders of the new luxe bathroom, with its multiple adjacent toilets, bidets for every bottom, and showers roomy enough for a correctional facility. A big tub, raised several steps like the altar in a shrine, is fed by a circle of jets that pummel or caress, depending on your mood. The first time you sink into the water's plush motion, you emit a spontaneous “Sweet!” And next day, you learn that your neighbor's big tub has a diving board.

Jesus said that we'll always have the poor with us; he let the rich find out for themselves that they'll always have the richer.

Nothing will refashion us more than the wonders we're promised by technology—our new toys, our lineless new lifelines. Technological development has brought us to the borders of a wireless state whose terrain we've only begun to enter. To buy into a technology's novelty, we're willing to lock our better judgment in the attic. When the CD was introduced in the early 1980s, for example, the ads promised “Perfect sound. Forever.” OK, maybe not if you used the lustrous discs as coasters or Frisbees, but otherwise. In fact, the sound of those first CDs was awful, and the prospect of its lasting forever was terrifying. But the discs improved, as did the equipment to scan their surfaces and spin their data into sound. The upstart CD won our allegiance and vanquished the venerable LP, though to this day there are those who claim superiority for the analog sound of the vinyl record. Like old priests left to guard the rituals of a dying religion, they continue to dust surfaces, purify the tips of styli, and calibrate the force of tone arms rather than slide a “perfect” disc onto a tray and push a button. (The priests are right, but they've lost the war to that old devil convenience.)

Now we're told that it's time to put the CD, too, behind us, in the Dumpster with the records and cassettes, and welcome the superaudio CD (which may in turn lose a war to that new devil, downloading). At least the CD had a run of a couple of decades. Pity the adolescent but already obsolescing DVD. That's also to go behind us, in favor of one of two incompatible new technologies set for a war of their own. We didn't know we were dissatisfied with DVDs until we got the word, like vagrants being whacked with a cop's nightstick and told to move on.

The cell phone is perhaps the most conspicuous artifact of the new age, a fact of life about which parents really do

need to have a graphic sit-down with their kids. “Novelty always has some power, an unaccustomed mode of begging excites an unaccustomed degree of pity,” said Dr. Johnson. How else to explain the pandemic popularity of this device, an implement that has reduced to Russian roulette—dicing the previously settled purpose of a phone conversation: to communicate? We now drift in and out of such conversations across a minefield of echoes, elisions, and gaps, making what sense we can of large portions of them as if they were encrypted messages in wartime. (Yes, I know, cell phone technology is a work in progress and will one day be perfected, like the initially oval wheel.) The weighty rotary models of the 1950s and ’60s, the high-watermark of phone design, commanded respect. They knew their corded place on desks and bedside tables. They didn’t come with you; you went to them. Drop one on a foot, and you risked a toe. But the old phones did their job. Their designers had calibrated a comfortable distance between earpiece and mouthpiece. Rotary dials could be rushed forward, but they took their own imperial AT&T time to retract. While waiting, you gathered your thoughts.

In a remarkably short time, the cell phone has changed the character—lowered the bar—of daily life. The transfixed young cannot imagine that there was once a time when, if you were on an operating table or snorkeling or committing adultery, you were temporarily out of reach. Individuals who would bristle at the prospect of covert snooping into their lives have come to terms with abject public self-exposure—of their business dealings, their personal entanglements, their pets’ travails (“I told the vet to take the tail but keep it in a jar just in case”), their least movements (“I’m at the airport, the silvery terminal, in a black seat, near the Cinnabon stand, and I need a bathroom”). This widespread eavesdropping on others’ lives is new for ordinary citizens, and it’s accompanied by the same pretense that no one’s listening as government eavesdropping.

The cell phone is the scraggly bellwether of our new “on demand” existence; tattered phone conversations are but one of its capacities. Among the other things it does just as well are take pictures, play music and tiny movies and TV shows, and keep us Web tethered; one day soon it will tutor our children (unless it does that already), make coffee, and pick up the dry cleaning. It’s all the defibrillator we’ll need. And it awaits our commands, or, rather, demands. “On demand” is an unpleasant phrase, suggesting the stomped foot and tedious wail of the denied

child, yet it’s being promoted as the password to our newest world. What we want when we want it; better, what I want when I want it. Bespoke satisfaction. The new technology is a marvel, but it allows us, encourages us, to be extraordinarily self-ish. Imagine two earbudded music listeners sitting face to face, each in a state of acoustic bliss. They share . . . what? The cocoon of silence around them, cradling the din-to-order in their skulls. The technology empties the common ground. Or so goes the common indictment. But does this new splintering of exposure to the largely negligible products of popular culture really matter? If the two were reading books, would we expect them to read aloud to each other?

The magical devices will get smaller and smaller and perhaps be implanted in us, so that images can be projected onto the back of an eyeball and there will never be a moment when we can’t order up diversion. Sure, there’ll be a debate about the risks of driving 80 miles an hour with one eye on the road and the other on ESPN, one hand on a cell phone, the other on a Mocha Magnum, and the wheel in one’s teeth. But it will be a crisis manufactured by the nine remaining Luddites. We’ll develop new capacities to meet our new challenges. Evolution isn’t done with us yet. After all, what would a TV viewer of 50 years ago have made of today’s typically cluttered news broadcast, with a ceaseless flow of information scrolling horizontally and descending vertically around an oblivious talking head in the center? One adapts, and doesn’t look back. A world without the omnipresent beamed image will become harder and harder to recall, as will a world that made less use of the adjective “instant” and one where phones stayed put.

The electrical wires that still trail and tangle in the real and fading world have been, for all our lifetimes, telltale evidence of what leads where. In the wireless replacement world, who knows where what is leading? We think we roam free, but we’re on a new electronic leash. The credit cards and keyboard clicks that seal the deal, over and over again, the radio devices already hidden in ordinary purchases—in clothing and cosmetics and books—draw a map of our wants. And on that grid of our desires we’re tracked and pinned.

In years to come, no one will be able to remember a world where that was not so. ■

Mother of Invention

The Statue of Liberty stood for decades in New York harbor before it became a symbol of welcome to newcomers. In forgetting that fact, Americans reveal their taste for myths about immigration.

BY PETER SKERRY

“IT SAYS SOMETHING ABOUT OUR COUNTRY THAT people around the world are willing to leave their homes, leave their families, and risk everything to come to America,” President George W. Bush declared this past April, when Americans were in the midst of their most intense debate over immigration in decades.

The president’s observation is surely correct, as far as it goes. Yet it also says something about our country that we so readily embrace such flattering characterizations of ourselves. One consequence is that we routinely downplay less gratifying, more complicated dimensions of our national experience with immigration. Millions of people from around the world have left behind much that they cherish and endured great difficulties to live in the United States. Yet it is not necessarily true—as the president clearly suggests—that all, or even most, migrants to these shores have intended to settle here permanently and become Americans. We can point to the Irish who arrived fleeing famine and British rule and never looked back, or to Jewish refugees escaping pogroms in czarist Russia who never dreamed of returning. Nevertheless, many others came planning to stay only for a time, and then return to their families and homelands. Similarly today, millions arrive here not intending to make this their permanent home—though over time, of course, their plans change, and many do end up staying.

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President Bush’s comment reminds us how much immigration is bound up with our national identity, and inevitably our national myths. More than most public-policy debates, the one over immigration is permeated with powerful rhetoric and symbolism. At the same time, immigration is an arcane, complicated area of policy in which legislative details directly affect the lives of millions of individuals, families, and businesses. The combination of emotional symbols and rhetoric, technical complexity, and targeted, high-stakes interests makes immigration a unique—and uniquely intractable—issue.

Advocates, politicians, journalists, and immigration policy experts have all been using rhetoric and symbols to great effect in today’s debates. Yet at one time or another, all have felt the need to bring the argument back down to earth, at which point they typically focus on the role of concrete interests in immigration policy. Unfortunately, this usually translates into a narrow emphasis on business interests. But because immigration can never be reduced simply to a debate over any such interests, the focus eventually moves back to the emotionally satisfying and intellectually undemanding rhetoric and symbols of our immigration history.

Among such symbols, none looms larger than the Statue of Liberty. As it turns out, the history of that monument itself demonstrates the mutability of symbols. This history was explored more than 30 years ago by the dean of American immigration historians, the late John Higham, in an insightful but overlooked essay, “The Transformation

of the Statue of Liberty,” in a remarkable collection of his articles titled *Send These to Me* (1975). As every schoolchild knows (or at least used to know), the statue was a gift from France to the United States. Intended to commemorate French support of our war for independence, Liberty—actually, only her raised arm holding the torch—made her first appearance at the Philadelphia Exposition of 1876. The sculptor, Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi, was part of a circle of French liberals who conceived of Liberty as a gift from the French people to their republican brothers and sisters across the Atlantic. One consequence, as historian David Hackett Fischer points out, was that its cost was underwritten not by the French state but by private subscription and lottery. More to the point, Liberty was depicted as a woman whose austere, classical demeanor was meant to suggest the universality of America’s founding ideals. These were underscored by the tablets of law that she cradles in one arm and the torch she holds high with the other. And with her back to New York, Liberty strides oceanward, sending her light out into the world.

Thus, at its origins the Statue of Liberty had nothing to do with immigration. It was intended as a beacon of hope to those struggling for liberty in their own lands, not as a welcome light for those seeking liberty here. As Higham points out, when the statue was unveiled on its completed pedestal in New York Harbor in 1886, the dignitaries’ inaugural speeches “concentrated almost exclusively on two subjects: the beneficent effect on other countries of American ideas, and the desirability of international friendship and peace.”



“Liberty Enlightening the World” was the official name its French donors gave the Statue of Liberty. It is shown here under assembly in France three years before its 1886 dedication in New York.

Yet even before the statue was in place, its transformation into a symbol of welcome to immigrants from around the world had subtly begun. In 1883, with the statue almost completed but the pedestal only half finished, the private Pedestal Fund Committee sponsored an art auction to raise desperately needed funds. Among the items auctioned off was the manuscript of a sonnet inspired by the statue, “The New Colossus,” by Emma Lazarus. The daughter of a wealthy New York sugar refiner, Lazarus was a secular, assimilated Jew. But in the early 1880s, as Jews fleeing pogroms in Russia began to arrive in New York, she became a champion of her people. And thus began the rein-

The New Colossus

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.

“Keep ancient lands, your storied pomp!” cries she
With silent lips. “Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”

—Emma Lazarus

terpretation of the Statue of Liberty into a symbol not merely of welcome to immigrants but, more specifically, of refuge to those fleeing persecution and oppression.

Still, Lazarus’s sonnet remained in obscurity for more than half a century. At Liberty’s inauguration, the poem went completely ignored. Twenty years after the auction, in 1903, a friend and admirer of Lazarus had her words engraved on a bronze tablet, but it was placed on an out-of-the-way interior wall of the pedestal. Through most of the 1930s, the statue remained nothing more than a symbol, as Higham writes, of “Franco-American friendship and liberty as an abstract idea.” Even when President Franklin Roosevelt celebrated the 50th anniversary of the statue in 1936, he failed to mention Lazarus’s sonnet.

Yet throughout this period, immigrants were arriv-

ing in New York Harbor and passing by Liberty on their way to nearby Ellis Island. The emotional impact of that scene—whatever immigrants’ motives for coming here—fueled the symbolic transformation begun by Lazarus’s still-unknown poem. In Higham’s words, the immigrants saw Liberty “not as a beacon to other lands but as a redemptive salutation to themselves.” This remained only immigrant folklore, however—nothing more than an unofficial interpretation.

But then, thanks to the tireless efforts of Slovenian-American journalist Louis Adamic, the immigrants’ emotional responses to the statue became truly part of the national consciousness. Starting in the late 1930s, Adamic’s countless articles and lectures about immigrants invariably quoted from “The New Colossus.” During World War II, the sonnet was set to music and received even more attention. In 1945, the bronze tablet of 1903 was moved from its obscure location to Liberty’s main entrance.

The event that most decisively brought Lazarus’s sonnet to the attention of the American public was the plight of Jewish refugees in Nazi-dominated Europe. This was, of course, reminiscent of the situation that had so moved Lazarus more than 50 years earlier. Yet this time the association of the Statue of Liberty with refugees and victims of oppression generally stuck. In 1965, President Lyndon Johnson signed a historic immigration reform law in a ceremony at the base of the statue, and he cited Lazarus’s poem, using the occasion to announce a new program to aid refugees from Castro’s Cuba.

This understanding of America as a haven for those seeking liberty is not incorrect. As Higham notes, “The concept of America as a refuge from European oppression supplied one of the original, fertilizing elements of our national consciousness.” But focusing exclusively on this one aspect of our immigration history hinders a fuller understanding of the complicated motivations of immigrants to these shores.

For example, contrary to Lazarus’s stirring phrase about “Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,” many immigrants have come to the United States not on account of lofty aspirations for political freedom but because of much more mundane appetites for economic security and advancement. Obviously, these two motives are not unrelated. But they are distinct and should not be so readily confounded.

Another source of confusion has been Lazarus’s language about “your tired, your poor . . . The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.” Historian Josef Barton, among others, has pointed out that immigrants to America in the past

were typically people with at least some modest means to plan ahead and pay for transatlantic passage. The most deprived and downtrodden in any society are the least likely to be able to do that.

Perhaps most difficult to absorb is the fact that immigrants have often planned not to settle here permanently. Labor economist Michael Piore reminds us that in the period leading up to World War I, about one-third the number arriving from Europe returned home. The emigration rates for specific southern and eastern European nationalities (with the notable exception of Jews) were significantly higher. And none of the historical statistics captures the presumably even larger numbers of immigrants who arrived in the United States planning to return home but failed to do so.

Today similar patterns are evident, especially among Mexican immigrants. Princeton sociologist Douglas Massey has documented that it is not the most destitute who migrate north to the United States, but rather those with a modicum of education and resources. Indeed, Massey argues that Americans' perceptions of Mexico generally are distorted, pointing out that it is not exactly the poor, underdeveloped country we assume. He acknowledges the gap between America's per capita income (\$36,300) and Mexico's (\$8,900), but contrasts Mexico's standing with the Congo's (\$600), emphasizing Mexico's rough equivalence to Russia, with a per capita income of \$9,700. And in terms of life expectancy, Mexico surpasses Russia—72.3 versus 67.7 years.

The evidence is that many immigrants arrive in the United States today intending to return home. Massey's research on Mexican migrants demonstrates this intention among many legal as well as illegal immigrants. The journey to El Norte typically reflects a conscious plan to maximize income, minimize expenditures, and return with enough money to start a business or, especially, build a house. Anthropologist Leo Chavez calls such immigrants "target earners," people who come with specific savings goals that they meet by enduring many hardships—including long hours at dangerous jobs and substandard, overcrowded living conditions.

To be sure, such plans change, and many immigrants put down roots here and stay. But that process is gradual, and the original intention of returning home has enduring effects. For example, it helps to explain why school districts in the Southwest with large immigrant populations empty out for weeks at a time in the winter, when Mexican families return home for the holidays. It also may explain why many immigrants

do not place as much emphasis on learning English as they otherwise might. Or why many feel conflicted about assimilating into American society and are reluctant to let go of their native culture. Finally, such ambivalence might well explain why immigrants do not always seem as grateful to be here as Americans would like.

Immigration is often not the dramatic, single-moment-in-time event we think of when we envision immigrants sailing past the Statue of Liberty. It is a complicated, drawn-out process, subject to diverse and contradictory pressures. Instead of being surprised or offended by immigrants' failure to meet our ill-informed and romanticized expectations, we Americans should think about what we might do to clarify the many choices immigrants must make once they arrive. We could be much more explicit about what we expect of them, while at the same time doing much more to help them meet those expectations. Instead of arguing about bilingual ballots and education, for example, we could focus our energy and resources on developing better English-language programs.

In effect, we need a greater dose of realism in our thinking about immigration. A good place to begin is with Reinhold Niebuhr's *The Irony of American History* (1952), in which he carefully distinguishes among pathos, tragedy, and irony. Pathos elicits pity because it emerges when humans are overwhelmed by circumstances and are effectively denied choice. In contrast, tragedy provokes admiration because it involves the conscious choice of evil for the sake of good.

Irony is more complicated—and compelling. It arises when contradictory or inconsistent reasons for our actions remain hidden from our understanding. Niebuhr emphasized that irony, unlike pathos, involves responsibility. Yet unlike tragedy, it does not involve full consciousness of choices being made. Ironic tension can be resolved only when individuals—or nations—come to a truer understanding of themselves.

Niebuhr counseled Americans to move beyond irony, to see through the illusions and pretensions to which our unique history and power have made us particularly susceptible. In a similar way, the American debate over immigration would benefit from more self-conscious scrutiny of the beloved symbols and rhetoric that distort our understanding of this critical dimension of our national life. ■

The Hotel Africa

A growing number of Africans are arriving in the United States in search of a better life. But even as these immigrants learn to negotiate a complex new culture, they cannot forget the beloved and blighted lands that sent them forth, yet call them back.

BY G. PASCAL ZACHARY

I DREAD PHONE CALLS FROM AFRICA.

A sister is having a baby, her fifth, and wants us to send cash before the birth. An aunt calls on Christmas Day, hoping to tap our holiday spirit. Can't we pay for human traffickers to sneak her into the United States? The price is "only" \$5,000, which strikes me as suspiciously low. My father-in-law rings just long enough to ask for a return call. Another aunt calls to announce that, tired of waiting for us to send money, she's changed her name from Patience to Joy. She really has. Then there is the distant relative phoning for the first time, asking us to pay his rent, his children's school fees, anything.

These people telephone because my wife, Chizo, is an African living in America. To be precise, Chizo is a Nigerian living in northern California. The telephoners are Nigerians too. They don't know California from the Carolinas, but they are poor, needy, and, by comparison with Chizo, in dire straits. They want her help, and usually help means sending cash. Chizo is a hair braider, working long hours for low pay and earning nothing when there are no heads to braid.

G. PASCAL ZACHARY, a former foreign correspondent for *The Wall Street Journal*, often writes on African affairs. His books include *The Diversity Advantage: Multicultural Identity in the New World Economy* (2003), and he is currently working on a memoir of his marriage to an African.

Her mother and father live in Nigeria's second-largest city, where they can afford to rent only a small, windowless room with no running water, bathroom, or kitchen. Chizo regularly sends money to her parents, her six siblings, and her favorite aunts. She also supports a daughter in Togo, whom we are preparing to bring to America.

No matter how much money Chizo sends, her African relatives are never satisfied, and she feels that her obligations to them remain unmet. She is haunted by Africa, haunted by requests for money and her great distance from the motherland. From all of 8,000 miles away, she misses Africa, and the ache in her heart is not diminished by her support of family members.

When Chizo came to California three years ago, she joined an estimated one million African immigrants living in the United States, many of whom have come in recent years because of changes in U.S. immigration laws. Before 1980, African immigrants overwhelmingly moved to Europe, in part because its former colonial powers left more doors open. That year, Congress made it easier to enter the United States as a refugee, and in 1990 it created visa "lotteries" for high school graduates from nations his-

torically underrepresented in the United States, such as Ghana and Nigeria. “This lottery,” notes Salih Omar Eissa, a child of Sudanese parents who has studied immigration law, “quickly became the primary method by which Africans immigrated” to the United States.

As a result of these changes, the African-born population has boomed. More than half of the sub-Saharan, or black, Africans living in the United States today have arrived since 1990. Hailing from Nigeria, my wife is part of the largest single African contingent. More immigrants—an estimated 150,000—have come to the United States from Nigeria than from any other sub-Saharan country. Newcomers from Ghana rank second, Ethiopians third, Liberians fourth, Somalis and Kenyans fifth and sixth. Though these numbers reflect both legal and illegal immigration, they seem to undercount Africans in the United States. No matter what the actual number is, Africans are a tiny part, a mere 2.8 percent, of the foreign-born population legally in the United States,



Two worlds: Despite great success after more than 30 years in America, the Ahonkhais family of suburban Philadelphia still feels the tug of Nigeria. Most African immigrants have fared well. Vincent Ahonkhais is a corporate vice president, Bernadine holds an education doctorate, and their four children hold undergraduate and graduate degrees.

according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Yet the significance of these new African immigrants eclipses their relatively small number, for it highlights the enormous changes in American society over the past 40 years while reminding us that for centuries Africans came to this country in chains. “More Africans Enter U.S. Than in Days of Slavery,” *The New York Times* headlined a front-page article last year. Because of the central role of slavery in American history and the still-vexing problem of black-white relations, African immigrants are worth watching.

To be sure, generalizing about Africans is tricky. Africa south of the Sahara is highly diverse. The term “African” is a construction open to gross misunder-

standings; an astonishing 98 percent reportedly have completed high school. One-third of African women and 38 percent of African men hold professional and managerial jobs. Because of their education and because Africans generally live in the largest American cities, where wages tend to be highest, both sexes earn about 20 percent more than the median pay of all American workers. African immigrants are younger than other immigrants. Only 2.6 percent are over 65, the lowest percentage of any immigrant group; more than 70 percent are between 25 and 54.

I talk with Africans regularly in my frequent visits to Africa and in the United States, and so I meet them in Africa dreaming about coming to America and meet them in America dreaming of returning to or saving their motherland. The principal challenge for recently arrived Africans in America is not succeeding in the United States—they are—but realizing their desire to maintain a dynamic relationship

**YEARS ABROAD HAVEN'T diminished
Ike Nwadeyi's sense of identity. “You can't
put a Nigerian in your pocket,” he says.**

standing. (George W. Bush, during his first presidential campaign, compared Africa to Mexico, as if both were countries.) Travel within sub-Saharan Africa is frequently difficult, and people from different parts of the region often do not display any immediate solidarity, racial or otherwise. I was reminded of Africa's great diversity when I attended a private party recently at an Oakland nightclub, not far from where Chizo and I live. The guests were mainly from Cameroon and spoke French. In the same club, in the next room, a group of Ethiopians were also partying. The two groups ate different foods, listened to different music, dressed differently, danced differently—and carried on separately. No wonder. Paris and Moscow are much closer to each other than Lagos and Addis Ababa.

Despite such differences and a tendency to stick close to their own, African immigrants in the United States have much in common. They tend to be highly educated and to come from relatively privileged backgrounds. More than four in 10 hold university

degrees; an astonishing 98 percent reportedly have completed high school. One-third of African women and 38 percent of African men hold professional and managerial jobs. Because of their education and because Africans generally live in the largest American cities, where wages tend to be highest, both sexes earn about 20 percent more than the median pay of all American workers. African immigrants are younger than other immigrants. Only 2.6 percent are over 65, the lowest percentage of any immigrant group; more than 70 percent are between 25 and 54.

I talk with Africans regularly in my frequent visits to Africa and in the United States, and so I meet them in Africa dreaming about coming to America and meet them in America dreaming of returning to or saving their motherland. The principal challenge for recently arrived Africans in America is not succeeding in the United States—they are—but realizing their desire to maintain a dynamic relationship

with Africa. Their attachment to the motherland arises at least partly from a belief that the enormous outflow of talent from Africa, however understandable given the hardships of life there, poses a great developmental handicap. “Africans are doing incredible things in the U.S.,” says Derrick Ashong, a Ghanaian-born Harvard graduate who lives in New York City and is building an African media company. “Would our countries be underdeveloped if our energies were applied back home?” So long as Africa suffers under the burden of poverty and inequity, war and disease, Ashong's question is both a challenge and a reproach to Africans in America.

Ike Nwadeyi is a stickler for manners. He wants his daughter to greet him each day with the words, “Good morning, sir.” When she lived in America with him, she told him, “Hi, Daddy.” He angrily replied, “You don't tell me, ‘Hi, Daddy.’”

This breakfast banter explains why Nwadeyi's

seven-year-old daughter is growing up in Nigeria while he works in Washington, D.C., and obtains his American citizenship. "America will spoil my daughter," he insists. "Children have no manners here. By growing up in Nigeria, she'll know what I mean by respect."

Nwadeyi's daughter lives with his wife, a geologist working for Chevron in oil-rich Nigeria. Her job is too well paying and too interesting for her to abandon. So she stays in Nigeria, while Nwadeyi lives in the United States and drives a taxi. "There's no enjoyment in this country," he says. "Nothing. This country has no life." But working in America affords him the chance to visit Nigeria for long stretches when he wishes. His presence in the United States and his American citizenship give his family an insurance policy against the instability that always threatens Nigeria, but he is typical of the many Africans who leave their young children behind in Africa so they can be raised properly.

Before Nwadeyi came to the United States, he lived in Thessalonica, where he studied business at a Greek university. His many years in Europe and the United States, however, have not diminished his sense of identity. "You can't hide a Nigerian," he says. "We are loud. It is natural. You can't put a Nigerian in your pocket."

Nwadeyi's straddle of two worlds is typical of recent African immigrants. "Africans represent a new type of immigrant," writes Sylviane A. Diouf, a scholar of African migration who is a researcher at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York City. "They are transnationals, people who choose to maintain their separateness in the host country and retain tight links to their community of origin." Drawing strength from migration, Diouf observes, "they generally view their American experience as transitory, the most effective way to construct a better future at home for themselves and their relatives."

Of course, Diouf's description of Africans might be applied to many immigrant groups. Filipinos, Koreans, Central Americans, Mexicans, Russians, Chinese, and Indians maintain strong ties to their countries of origin. What sets Africans apart is the undeniable marginalization of their homeland. Sub-

Saharan Africa is the only major region of the world that has grown poorer over the past several decades and that has seen a dramatic decline in the job market for highly skilled workers. The development arcs of Mexico, China, India, South Korea, and most other countries exporting people to the United States are traveling in the opposite direction. These countries are increasingly sophisticated, wealthy, and accommodative of the needs of talented people. Indeed, in some parts of India and China and elsewhere, job opportunities are now far better than in the United States.

Only in black Africa, among the world's regions, have conditions deteriorated, and not just for the elite. Because of the plights of their home countries, Africans are forced to create a distinctive relationship with both America and Africa. In short, no other immigrant group carries anything like the baggage that Africans carry—a homeland that is a source of embarrassment but also offers an unparalleled opportunity to give back.

Africans feel that the quickest route to becoming "super-empowered" individuals capable of giving back to the motherland is success in the United States. The pull of their homeland paradoxically drives them to greater heights in America. "They are fast learning how to live the American dream," wrote Joseph Takougang, a professor of African history at the University of Cincinnati, in a recent survey. "They are becoming involved in their communities, starting small businesses, and participating in local politics."

As people of African origin have gained visibility in America in recent years, their sometimes-troubled relations with African Americans have belied Americans' monolithic views of race. Many white Americans as well as African Americans have assumed that African immigrants are natural allies of African Americans, and are surprised when tensions surface.

One figure who has put the spotlight on Africa is Illinois senator Barack Obama, son of a Kenyan. In his 2004 senatorial campaign, he had to establish his "blackness" in the eyes of the African-American elec-



Chizo, the author's wife, shares a light moment with her husband at a Ugandan fruit market. Cheap air transportation makes it relatively easy for today's immigrants from even very distant places to maintain close ties to home.

torate because he had been raised by a white mother. Even his Africanness was considered attenuated. In his memoir, *Dreams From My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance* (1995), Obama symbolically reclaims his Africanness by traveling to Kenya. None of these gymnastics in the establishment of identity makes sense in an African context. In the United States, Obama's carefully constructed identity is critical to his public career.

Diallo, an unarmed New York street vendor from Guinea who was shot by police in 1999. Events such as the Diallo killing promote a common understanding of what it means to be black in America by reminding Africans that black people still face sometimes-fatal racial prejudice. Mallet, who grew up in Africa with a white mother and a black father, feels obliged to sympathetically hear out African-American objections to mainstream American society.

The friction between African immigrants and African Americans is perhaps starkest in applications of affirmative action policies. Often, hiring preferences work to the advantage of people who have just arrived in the United States. Because many African immigrants are highly educated, they can compete for jobs that might otherwise go to African Americans. Tensions between the two groups are exacerbated by African insensitivity. "Too many Africans are dismissive of African Americans in a general way," says Victor Mallet, a Ghanaian who works with black small-business owners in Philadelphia. He notes that Africans fear being lumped together with African Americans as second-class citizens. They also harbor some of the same stereotypes of African Americans held by many whites.

To be sure, Africans in America experience racism and outrages, such as the death of Amadou

“More Africans need to look past the appealing notion that America is a meritocracy and that there is equal opportunity for all,” says Mallet, who first came to the United States to attend the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the 1990s. “While Africans are right not to hide behind the excuse of racial bias, they also must comprehend the history of African-American exclusion—and how racial awareness continues to distort American life today.”

The core division between Africans and African Americans is rooted in radically different notions of identity, and is therefore unlikely to vanish anytime soon. For Africans, ethnic identification—what was once known as tribe—trumps race. When my wife first came to California, she did not view black people as natural allies, but sought help from West Africans, people reared close to her home turf. She visited braiding shops, looking for casual work and new friends, and joined a shop managed by two Cameroonian women and staffed by braiders from Senegal and Gabon. The braiders became Chizo’s best friends and the shop a virtual Africa that helped ease her transition to a new and alien country.

My wife is the only Nigerian in the braiding shop, but she found many nearby, even members of her own ethnic group, the Igbo. A local grocery store, run by an Igbo man, sells her favorite foods from home: *gari* (cassava), dried fish, fresh yams, plantains, and an exotic spice called *ugba*. A community of Igbo Catholics holds a monthly Mass in her native language. In our living room, she hangs a Nigerian flag (and the flags of the United States and Ghana, where she and I first met).

Too great an attachment to one’s community of origin can encourage provincial thinking, of course. Chizo’s own fellow Igbos are quite clannish, and of the scores I have met in America, not one is married to a non-Igbo, and certainly not a white American. To the Igbos I meet, my wife is somewhat suspect. They question why she would marry, not outside

her race, but outside her ethnic group. Possessing pride born partly from their communal suffering during the Biafran war, Igbos have the kind of ethnic solidarity found in Armenian, Jewish, and Kosovar communities.

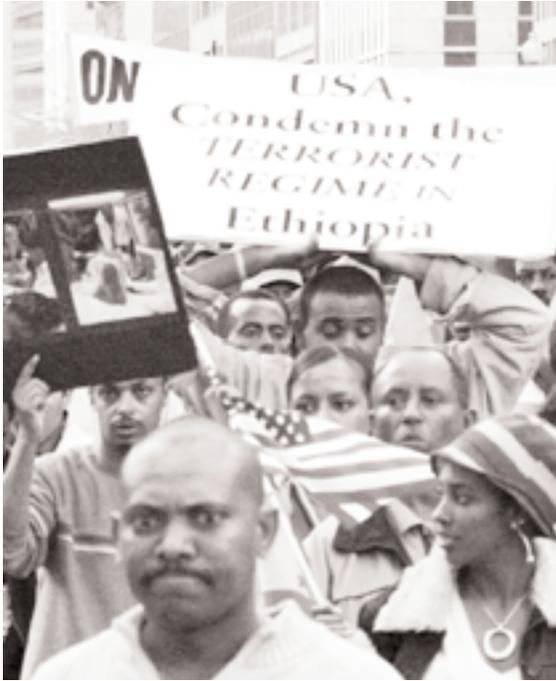
Africans have no monopoly on ethnic narcissism. More striking, actually, is their openness to wide currents and their willingness to draw on materials not indigenous to Africa. A young African writer, Taiye Tuakli-Wosornu, a Yale graduate living in New York, has coined the term “Afropolitan” to highlight the benefits of blending a cosmopolitan outlook with continuing participation in one’s African community. “Perhaps what most typifies the Afropolitan consciousness is this . . . effort to understand what is ailing Africa alongside

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, and technological forces are driving Africans in America toward playing a larger role in their home countries.

the desire to honor what is uniquely wonderful,” Tuakli-Wosornu writes.

The Afropolitans must succeed in America, but in a manner that pushes them toward Africa, not away from it. The emergence of a new generation of African writers, who succeed first in the United States and then gain an audience in Africa, illustrates this pattern. In his short-story collection *The Prophet of Zongo Street* (2005), Mohammed Naseehu Ali, who lives in Brooklyn and has spent 17 years in the United States since arriving at the age of 18 to attend university, rescues the rich folk stories of his Hausa forebears in Ghana and Nigeria. Ensnared in America, by day he works at the database company Lexis-Nexis, and at night he emerges in Brooklyn as a troubadour of the wisdom of his ancestors. “I have great hope for Africa,” he says.

Like a number of African writers, Ali published



Lobbying on issues of concern back home is a time-honored practice of immigrants, and now Africans are adding their voices. Here, Ethiopian immigrants call for U.S. pressure on longtime Ethiopian ruler Meles Zenawi.

first in the United States and is preoccupied with the African experience, home and away. Uzodinma Iweala, who last year published a celebrated short novel, *Beasts of No Nation*, also draws on African sources in his tale about child soldiers. Shuttling between D.C. and Lagos, he is now building a literary reputation in Nigeria on the strength of his American success. “You can’t ever escape being a Nigerian,” he told an interviewer in the United States recently, adding:

If you try to say, ‘No, I am not Nigerian,’ people say, ‘What are you talking about? I know where your father is from. I know the village. There is no way that you can tell me you are not Nigerian.’ In fact, if you don’t come back and maintain the ties, people start asking questions. It’s not as if when you leave you are looked down upon for leaving your country. Most Nigerians that you speak to here expect to return to Nigeria at some point in time—whether or not that will actually happen is not important. It’s the mentality.

In the past, many new immigrants to America said they would maintain tight links to their countries of origin, but over time they—and their children and grandchildren—have not. Fidelity to Africa, so intensely felt by most immigrants, may also fade over time. “Are they [African immigrants] going to melt into the African-American population?” historian Eric Foner asked in an article in *The New York Times* last year. “Most likely yes.”

The opposite could well happen. Economic, social, and technological forces are driving Africans in America toward playing a larger role in their home countries in the years ahead. The spread of cell phones in Africa and the rise of Internet telephony in the United States make calling back to Africa—once an expensive and tedious task often requiring many connection attempts—inexpensive and easy. Flights to all parts of sub-Saharan Africa, while not cheap, are more frequent than ever. And private companies operating in Africa are beginning to see the pool of skilled Africans working in the United States as a source of managerial and professional talent. Though Africa’s brain drain continues, a small but significant number of people are returning to the continent to take jobs or start businesses.

Demographic forces are at play too. As the first big wave of African immigrants from the 1980s approaches retirement, some look homeward. No statistics are kept on Africans who move back for good. But some members of all immigrant groups do return home and always have, even before the days of easy travel, telephone calls, and money transfers. Roughly half of all Italian immigrants to the United States before World War I returned home permanently. Today, because documentation is essential for crossing borders, legal immigrants must first acquire a green card and then, usually, a U.S. passport. Once in possession of papers, an African who leaves the United States invariably will come back to it, if only to work. As they age, some Africans are retiring to their home countries, funding an African lifestyle with American dollars. So many Ghanaians are repatriating, for instance, that a Texas homebuilder has an operation in Ghana that has constructed hundreds of houses for returnees.

Africans commonly travel back and forth, moti-

vated as much by opportunity and nostalgia as by a kind of survivor's guilt. My wife often expresses nagging doubts about the fairness of living affluently in America while her family lives in deprivation back home. "Why did I escape the poverty of Africa," she asks. "What kind of God chooses paradise for me and misery for my loved ones?"

The cries of Africans left behind are difficult to drown out, and they shape the aspirations of Africans in America. Consider the choices made by my friend Guy Kamgaing, an engineer from Cameroon who arrived in the United States to attend graduate school 11 years ago. Now 35, he has built a successful career in Los Angeles in the burgeoning field of mobile telephony. He holds a green card, is married (to another Cameroonian, an accountant), and has two children. He is living, in short, the American dream, and the corruption and difficulty of doing business in Cameroon make him reluctant to return full time. Yet Kamgaing maintains a big African dream. He is renovating a hotel in the Cameroon port city of Douala that his father, now 72 and still living in the city, built and ran through good times and bad. The 160-room hotel is a relic—sprawling, decrepit, a nuisance, and, until recently, shuttered.

One morning, I met Kamgaing on the roof of the hotel. He has opened a café there, and the waiter served us café au lait and croissants. I could see for miles: the Atlantic Ocean, the forests ringing the city, the crowded streets. It was the rainy season, the air was heavy, and I could feel the two of us moving back in time, to 40 years ago, soon after independence, when Cameroon was wealthy thanks to abundant timber, oil, and agricultural production; it was home to tens of thousands of French people; and the future looked bright. The hotel, called the Beausejour Mirabel, is a means by which Kamgaing can honor his father and revive his country.

The task is difficult. He has renovated the lobby

and is repairing rooms floor by floor. Soon he will reopen the long-empty pool on the roof. He knows that the project is a drain, robbing him of capital he might invest in his American life, but he finds it irresistible. "Sometimes when I think about this hotel, it brings tears to my eyes," he says. "I am resurrecting my father's pride and joy." The hotel even boasts wireless Internet access, which not even its poshest competitors in Douala offer. Kamgaing wants to establish a mid-priced hotel, but the odds are against him because

THE CRIES OF AFRICANS left behind are difficult to drown out, and they shape the aspirations of Africans in America.

the city's few foreign visitors usually want luxury, not nostalgia and value.

Back in northern California recently, Kamgaing visited my house for dinner. While he spooned up my wife's goat meat and pepper soup, he admitted that perhaps he has gone slightly mad in reviving the old hotel. But he's proving that he hasn't forsaken the land of his birth.

My wife has yet to find her Hotel Africa. I was reminded of the delicacy of her search one night not long ago, when she and I dined with a Jewish friend and his father, approaching 85, who was visiting from Long Island. As a child living near the home of Anne Frank in Amsterdam, the father had been snatched by the Nazis and sent to a death camp. Chizo told him that his ordeal and that of the Jewish people in Europe reminded her of the suffering of her own people, the Igbo, who tried to secede from Nigeria some 35 years ago and form their own nation, Biafra. Her older brother and sister, then infants, died during the war that followed—along with a million other Nigerians. "Every people suffer," she said. The old survivor smiled.

The persistence of suffering in Africa may bind African immigrants to their homeland in unexpected ways. Perhaps Africans will never forget, and will be defined by memory, just as Jews have been. ■

Mélange Cities

The disruption that immigrants bring is often a benefit.

BY BLAIR A. RUBLE

TENSIONS AND CONFLICT GET THE HEADLINES when peoples make contact, but historically migration is not a singular event tied always to a “crisis.” Migrants of all sorts—immigrants, emigrants, refugees, displaced persons, guest workers—have become a significant presence in cities around the world. According to the UN Human Settlements Program, there are approximately 175 million official international migrants worldwide, not including those without complete documentation. Even this massive movement of people is not unprecedented. During the past 500 years, Europeans began to inhabit the rest of the world and nearly 10 million African slaves were forced to migrate to the Americas; another 48 million people left Europe for the Americas and Australia between 1800 and 1925. That is not to mention the tens of millions of people who have migrated across other national boundaries, continental divides, and oceans during the past half-century. Migration is simply part and parcel of human existence. And it has always brought fruitful encounters as well as conflict.

The transformative power of today’s migration is easiest to see not in established “mélange cities” such as New York but in traditionally more insular communities such as Washington, D.C., and Montreal, which were long divided by race, language, culture, religion, ethnicity, or class. Once split along single fault lines between two core groups—whites and blacks in Washington, French-speakers and English-speakers in Montreal—these urban centers have become new mélange cities,

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and the evidence suggests that we should view such transformations with more hope than fear.

Montreal offers the clearest example in North America of the creative disruption wrought by new immigrants. In that city divided—and defined—for decades by conflicts between Francophones and Anglophones, a curious story appeared in the press a couple of years ago. During the depths of a typically harsh Quebec February, it was reported that Filipino and Hispanic parents were trekking with their sick children through snow-filled streets to a small apartment complex in the fringe neighborhood of St.-Laurent, where they desperately beseeched an iconlike portrait of the Virgin Mary to cure them. Abderezak Mehdi, the Muslim manager of the low-rise building, claimed to have discovered the Virgin’s image in the garbage. According to Mehdi and Greek Melkite Catholic priest Michel Saydé, the Virgin shed tears of oil that could cure the ill and tormented. Michel Parent, the chancellor of the Roman Catholic archdiocese of Montreal, cautioned skepticism, noting that “while it is true that nothing is impossible for God, historically, that is not how God acts.”

This small and almost comically inclusive multicultural scene of healing, which unfolded in a dreary neighborhood built at a time when Montreal was starkly divided between speakers of French and of English, captures some of the positive aspects, as well as some of the tensions, of a change that has occurred over the past three decades or so, as immigrants and their Canadian-born children have grown to number more than a quarter of the city’s population.

Immigrants are not the only force for change. Mon-



A *mélange* city moment: Tara Hecksher (center), the product of an Irish-Nigerian marriage, was queen of Montreal's St. Patrick's Day Parade in 2004.

Montreal's growth into a sprawling metropolitan region laced by freeways that provide a new organizing structure of daily life has rendered many old cultural and geographical boundaries meaningless. The Internet is likewise no friend to the old order. But it is the newcomers, who have no stake in the city's past divisions, who have had a singular impact on its political life. The once-powerful Francophone *sovereigniste* movement, which long pressed for the secession of the entire province of Quebec from Canada, has lost momentum in considerable measure because of opposition from immigrant groups. Those groups were an essential component of the very narrow majority that defeated the last referendum on Quebec sovereignty in 1995, 50.6 percent to 49.4 percent. Pro-sovereignty politicians have since been looking for ways to court the immigrant vote. The communally based populism that once dominated Montreal politics is giving way, slowly but surely, to a new pragmatism more suited to a world in which communities compete for investment and bond ratings.

Montreal may be further along the road to true cultural diversity than most North American cities, but its experience is hardly unique. Metropolitan Washington, D.C., another historically divided city, was the United States' fifth largest recipient of legal migrants during the 1990s, and it is beginning to experience some of the same sort of change affecting Montreal.

Twenty-first-century Washington is already dramatically different from the "Chocolate City, Vanilla Suburbs" days of the 1970s. New arrivals from El Salvador and Ukraine, Ethiopia and Vietnam, Brazil and India, and dozens of other countries, as well as other areas of the United States, have fanned out across an expanding metropolitan region that extends from Frederick, Maryland, 50 miles to the west, to the shores of the Chesapeake Bay and beyond to the east; from north of Baltimore more than 100 miles south to Fredericksburg, Virginia. The region as a whole is an incredible polyglot blend. The neighborhoods in the inner-ring Virginia suburb of South Arlington defined by zip code 22204, as well as zip code 20009 in the city's trendy Adams Mor-

gan–Mt. Pleasant area, are each home to residents from more than 130 different countries, according to a group of Brookings Institution analysts led by Audrey Singer. Yet not very many Americans or even Washingtonians appear aware that their capital has become a *mélange* city.

After Congress gave up its direct oversight of the capital city and reinstated partial home rule in the 1970s, local affairs quickly came to be dominated by the politics of race. As children of the civil rights battles of the 1960s, many of Washington's first elected officials appeared to view local politics as a new version of the nation's great racial struggle, and

stadium, most local observers were not prepared for the spectacle of a raging city council debate waged virtually without any reference to race.

In other new *mélange* cities, the story plays out in different ways. The Latinization of Denver's population and voter base has encouraged both political parties to reach out to minority voters. Once-sleepy Charlotte, North Carolina, has been transformed by, among other things, a 932 percent increase in its Hispanic population between 1980 and 2000. The country's second-largest city, Los Angeles, elected Antonio Villaraigosa in 2005 as its first Hispanic mayor since it was a village of 6,000 people, back in 1872.

Similar shifts are occurring throughout the world. In the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv, immigrants from Vietnam, China, Pakistan, and the Middle East are blunting the force of a nationwide population decline, and officials are beginning to speak of migration as a long-term

answer to the country's economic and demographic decline.

Even as seemingly homogenous a society as Japan has felt the impact of immigration. Japan's shrinking population and economic uncertainty are helping to drive companies to relocate factories abroad. Japan's reputation for homogeneity is not unearned, and national policies do not encourage immigration, but local leaders in some cities have decided that the best way to keep their local economies healthy is to actively seek out migrants from abroad.

Few cities anywhere in the world have been as aggressive in pursuing international migrants as Hamamatsu. A city of more than half a million located half way between Tokyo and Osaka, Hamamatsu boasts major Honda, Yamaha, and Suzuki factories. Realizing that the city would lose its economic base without new residents, municipal officials began to recruit workers from Japanese migrant communities in Brazil and Peru. The officials assumed—rather naively, it would seem to American eyes—that given their Japanese heritage, the immigrants would easily fit into local neighborhoods and workplaces. In fact, the migrants were descendants of Japanese who had left the home islands as much as a century before. They were Brazil-

NEW ARRIVALS FROM El Salvador, Ukraine, Ethiopia, Vietnam, Brazil, India, and many other countries have made America's capital a *mélange* city.

symbolic politics took precedence over pragmatic city management. This civil rights regime began to fray as the city's financial and management problems grew, and by the time Mayor Marion Barry was arrested in 1990 on charges of smoking crack cocaine, the dream of the city's activist leadership to transform D.C. into a showcase for their values and policies had been shattered. Congress essentially placed the city in receivership by appointing a financial control board in 1995.

The collapse of local government prompted a new generation of neighborhood leaders to enter local politics, shifting attention to pragmatic concerns about city services and neighborhood quality of life—a focus that began to allow immigrants into the city's political mix even as their presence became a subject of debate. During his 2002 reelection campaign, for example, Mayor Anthony Williams stirred controversy by proposing that noncitizens should be allowed to vote in local elections. Arriving in large numbers just at the moment of municipal regime shift, immigrants helped mold a new, broader political environment in which race yielded its preeminence to more pragmatic concerns. When the first major issue of the new era emerged in 2004 in the form of a controversy over the financing of a new baseball



Ethnic Japanese immigrants returning after many years in South America have injected samba and other unexpected elements into the life of the home islands.

ian and Peruvian more than they were Japanese.

As a result, Hamamatsu—like Montreal, Washington, and many other *mélange* cities—is no longer the community it was. There are four Portuguese newspapers, four Brazilian schools and a Peruvian school, Portuguese and Spanish community centers, and numerous samba night-clubs. City hall now publishes local laws and regulations in several languages, and municipal leaders have learned to embrace Brazilian holidays as their own, often using them as launching pads for local political campaigns.

Other cities in Japan have been changing as well. Osaka, long the home of Japan's largest Korean community, publishes city documents in nearly a half-dozen languages. Sapporo and other communities on the island of Hokkaido post street signs in Russian. Tens of thousands of city residents of all ages and races turn out for Kobe's annual samba festival.

Migrants, though still few in number, have brought significant change to Japan. Some of that change is measurable and lamentable, such as increasing income inequality, rising crime rates, and enervated traditional institutions.

Other changes that cannot be measured neatly may be creating opportunities for communities to escape dysfunctional institutions and patterns of life. One unexpected effect of the search by Hamamatsu and other Japanese cities for labor from abroad has been pressure from below on the traditionally hyper-centralized Japanese state to cede some central control over immigration policy.

How should we weigh the negative and positive impacts of immigration? Is all change for the worse? Heightened anxiety over international terrorism has cast suspicion on cities themselves as a social form and on migration as a social phenomenon. The impulse to withdraw into a cocoon of homogeneity increasingly undermines the acceptance of difference. The experiences of *mélange* cities such as Montreal, Washington, and Hamamatsu show us another course. Voluntarily or not, such cities have come to represent lively alternatives to a 21st-century metropolitan future in which everyone seeks protection from others unlike themselves. Despite the new *mélange* cities' obvious imperfections, their enormous intercultural vitality provides the basis for successful strategies for a 21st century in which people's movement around the world remains a fact of human existence. ■

The New Pioneers

Rural America is hemorrhaging its native population, clearing the way for newcomers who see in its wide open spaces and plentiful menial jobs a land of opportunity. And small-town life is changing forever.

BY STEPHEN G. BLOOM

THE INSULATED WORLD OF NEW YORK MOVERS and shakers ends abruptly at the Hudson River. For Washington power brokers, that border is just outside the beltway. For California pop-culture *machers*, America ends at the Golden State Freeway. What's in between—roughly 2,900 miles—is flyover country: jigsaw-puzzle pieces scattered with thousands of dots that make news only when rivers overflow, twisters spin out of control, or shy Iowa seamstresses deliver septuplets.

Much of what our nation's coastal elites might think characterizes small-town rural America is true: Friday fish fries at the American Legion hall, shopping at Wal-Mart, Christmas crèches with live donkeys, camouflage-clad hunters stalking turkeys in the fall. You can tell who is driving past just by the familiar sound of the vehicle. The reason everyone seems related is because, if you go back far enough, many are, by either marriage or birth. In Iowa,

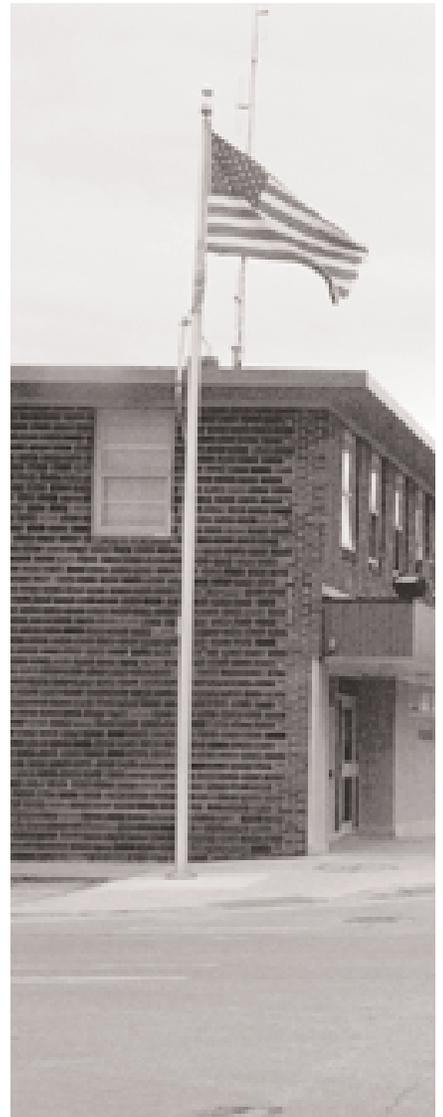
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where I live, names like Yoder, Snitker, Schroeder, and Slabach are as common as Garcia, Lee, Romero, and Chen are in big cities.

Rural America has always been homogenous, as white as the milk the millions of Holstein cows here produce. Many towns are so insular that farmers from another *county* are outsiders. Historically, at least after 1920, whether because it was too hard to get to, too uninviting, or too short on opportunity, few newcomers chose to knock on rural America's door.

Until now.

Four states—California, Texas, New York, and Florida—get two-thirds of the nation's immigrants. But for many immigrants these states serve only as ports of entry; once inside the United States they move north, east, and west, converging in rural America in waves of secondary





A few blocks of Lawler Street serve as the main thoroughfare in Postville, Iowa. The town's population, now more than 2,300, has nearly doubled since it began attracting immigrants to fill hundreds of jobs at a reopened meatpacking plant.

migration. Other newcomers head directly inland, altogether bypassing coastal cities. However the immigrants get here, rural America, which makes up 75 percent of the landmass of the United States, is up for grabs as tens of thousands of pioneers, almost all Hispanic, arrive each month.

While the countryside is changing fast, these newcomers arrive in a place where homes still sell for \$40,000, a serious crime is toilet-papering a high schooler's front yard, the only smog comes from a late-autumn bonfire, and getting stuck in traffic means being trapped behind a John Deere tractor on Main Street. But immigrants don't flock here for the quality of life. They come for one

reason: jobs. They are taking the places of the old who are dying, the young who are leaving, and the locals who refuse to take the low-paying, menial jobs that abound. In doing so, they are shaping rural America's future.

That future hinges on simple demographics. Iowa, in the heart of the heartland, is home to the highest percentage of people over 85, the second-highest percentage over 75, and the third-highest percentage over 65. Iowa's greatest export isn't corn, soybeans, or pigs; it's young adults. Many born in rural Iowa towns grow up well educated, products of the state's land-grant universities and an abiding familial interest in education. (Iowa has more high school diplomas per capita than any other state.) The

only state that loses a higher percentage of college-educated youth is North Dakota.

At the University of Iowa, where I teach, 60 percent of graduates each year choose to leave the state. With diplomas in hand, few want much to do with farming or living in a state where the nearest movie theater might be a 30-mile drive and the first freestanding Starbucks store opened just two years ago. From 1980 to 1990, all but seven of Iowa's 99 counties lost population. School districts consolidated or closed. If any state needed an influx of new residents, it was Iowa.

And that's what it got, starting in the mid-1990s. Almost all the newcomers were Hispanic immigrants, some legal, most illegal. Between 1990 and 2000 Iowa's population grew by 5.4 percent, to 2.9 million. Two-thirds of that growth was due to immigrants, mostly Latinos and

larly at many rural meatpacking houses, and the high turnover results in a revolving work force of inexperienced employees prone to accidents.

The journey to this jobs mecca is not without its own perils. Many Americans got a glimpse of those dangers in October 2002, when 11 smuggled Mexican immigrants were found dead inside a sealed Union Pacific grain hopper railcar in the Iowa meatpacking town of Denison, 130 miles west of Des Moines, that had originated in the border city of Matamoros, Mexico. Other popular Iowa destinations for slaughterhouse workers include Marshalltown (home to one of the largest pork-processing plants in the world, with 1,600 production jobs), Postville (home to the world's largest kosher slaughterhouse), Columbus Junction, Cherokee, Waterloo, West Liberty, Storm Lake, Sioux City, Sioux Center, Hartley, Tama, and Perry.

Once immigrants arrive, securing work is relatively easy. Just showing up at the employment window with a Social Security card, which can be purchased for as little as \$100, is usually all that's required. So many undocumented immigrants have converged on rural slaughterhouses that, even if there were a mandate to enforce employment laws, the immigration authorities

MIDWESTERN MEATPACKING plants provide easy employment opportunities for immigrants. Just showing up at the employment window with a Social Security card is usually all that's required.

couldn't begin to do so. The dirty secret in rural states about undocumented workers is that, politicians' and industry leaders' comments to the contrary, it is very much in their best interest to keep things the way they are. Without undocumented workers, the U.S. meat-processing industry would grind to a halt.

For more than a century, slaughterhouses were located in cities. Chicago rose to prominence because of its famed cattle-processing industry. The city's Union Stock Yards opened in 1865 and eventually grew to 475 acres of slaughterhouses. Today, only one slaughterhouse remains in Chicago. Industry leaders realized decades ago that it made more economic sense to bring meatpacking plants to corn-fed livestock than to truck livestock to far-off slaughterhouses in expensive cities with strong unions. Refrigeration allowed for processed meat to be trucked

mostly from Mexico. By 2000, Iowa's Hispanic population had grown 153 percent. The 2000 census counted 82,500 Hispanics in Iowa, but many say today that there are upwards of 150,000 here. By 2030, half of Iowa's population of three million is expected to belong to minority groups. By far the greatest number will be Hispanics working in low-level jobs.

Entry-level work for these newcomers is plentiful, usually as kill-floor employees at slaughterhouses, where workers don't need to know a word of English. The only requirements are a strong stomach and a strong back. It's no wonder locals spurn dangerous work as knockers, stickers, bleeders, tail rippers, flankers, gutters, sawers, and plate boners, toiling on what amounts to a "disassembly line." Turnover in these grueling jobs often exceeds 100 percent annually. Safety instruction is minimal, particu-

lary at many rural meatpacking houses, and the high turnover results in a revolving work force of inexperienced employees prone to accidents.



Phone and fax services for Hispanic immigrants eager to stay in touch with friends and family back home are among the offerings at El Vaquero, a store opened three years ago by Mexican-born Gustavo Moncado in Postville, Iowa. As he and son Luis mind the store, the television shows a World Cup match.

without spoilage. At the same time, the industry became highly mechanized. Innovations such as air- and electric-powered knives made skilled butchers unnecessary. Larger plants in rural outposts became more profitable than small urban slaughterhouses.

Wages for union meat-production workers peaked in 1980 at \$19 an hour, not including benefits. Today at many slaughterhouses, located in isolated pockets of America, starting pay is often not much more than minimum wage, with few or no benefits. At Postville's meat-packing plant, pay starts at \$6.25 an hour. Health insurance is available to workers and their families at about \$50 a week, but few can afford such a hefty deduction, and many immigrant workers aren't familiar with the concept of health insurance plans. Some don't believe they'll need the coverage, some think there must be a catch to it, and some figure they'll be fired or deported if injured.

Today, 90 percent of all packinghouses employ more than 400 workers. The meat and poultry we eat are processed in plants owned by large corporations such as Tyson Foods, Cargill Meat Solutions, Swift & Company, and Smithfield Foods, located for the most part in America's small towns. The rural states of Nebraska and Kansas rank first and second in beef processing. The world's largest turkey plant, Smithfield-owned Carolina Turkey, processes 80,000 turkeys a day and is located in the unincorporated eastern North Carolina community of Mount Olive (population 3,957).

Much has been written about the proliferation of fast-food restaurants and Wal-Mart stores in the rural United States, where, if immigrants can procure documents, they often find work. But

little has been noted about another industry that increasingly serves as a job magnet for newcomers: legalized casino gambling, with its insatiable appetite for low-wage restaurant and service workers, laborers, maids, and janitors. Iowa, in particular, has become fixated on casino gambling, which has led many to call the Hawkeye State the “Nevada of the Midwest.” Since Iowa legalized gambling on licensed excursion boats on the Mississippi River in 1989, no fewer than 17 casinos have opened in the state. Since its enactment, the law has been modified to allow gambling on licensed stationary riverboats, then in licensed casinos located on or adjacent to a body of water. Several casinos in Iowa today are miles from any river or lake, but are built on elaborate underground bladder systems to comply with the law. And more are on the way. Casinos opened in the rural towns of Northwood and Emmetsburg this past spring, another is scheduled to open in rural Riverside in September, and a fourth will open next spring in Waterloo (population 66,767). The casino industry makes peculiarly efficient use of the immigrant work force, targeting non-English-speakers as both low-wage workers and gamblers, in a new spin on the old company store. Immigrant workers return much of their wages by gambling in the same casinos that employ them. When all four new Iowa casinos are in operation, they will employ as many as 2,000 low-income workers, and that doesn’t include those in building trades needed to construct these gambling palaces.

Once they arrive for such jobs, learning local Midwestern culture is nearly impossible for most outsiders. In Iowa, county fairs, Future Farmers of America, regional dialect, knowing everyone *and* their parents, and foods such as seven-layer salad, Tater Tot casseroles, loose-meat sandwiches, Red Waldorf cake, and Lit’l Smokies (the state’s ubiquitous appetizers) are elements that bind natives together. Half of Iowa’s 952 incorporated towns have fewer than 500 residents, and two-thirds of the state’s towns have fewer than 1,000. The typical Iowa high school has so few seniors that there is a tradition of ordering T-shirts printed with the name of each member of the graduating class.

Some newly arrived immigrants do what they can to integrate with their rural neighbors and start the process of becoming Americanized; most, though, do not. There’s no need to try to fit in. In Marshalltown,

Iowa, for example, one-quarter of the slaughterhouse production employees, about 450, come from the Mexican town of Villachuato in the state of Michoacán. These workers, mostly men, travel frequently between Villachuato and Marshalltown, but few become permanent residents of Iowa. In a sense, they are commuters—working to earn money in Iowa, saving and sending it back home to Mexico, then returning to their families for months at a time. While here, they live and work together, forming a tight-knit Mexican enclave.

Postville, Iowa, has become a classic boomtown. In 1986, Aaron Rubashkin, a Hasidic butcher from Brooklyn, New York, bought a defunct slaughterhouse in Postville, installed his sons as managers, and soon started killing the rich, corn-fed Iowa beef. The meatpacking plant, AgriProcessors, ultimately became the largest kosher slaughterhouse in the world. As more and more Hasidim moved to town, tiny Postville became home to the most rabbis per capita of any municipality outside Jerusalem (meat must be certified by a rabbi to be labeled kosher). Hasidic Jews belong to one of 40 or so ultra-Orthodox sects; Rubashkin, his sons, and many who settled in Postville are members of one of the largest, Lubavitch. The kosher slaughterhouse in Postville operates six days a week, except for the Jewish Sabbath and holidays, and has a seemingly never-ending need to fill its 800 jobs. As many as 90 percent of its workers are Hispanic. In 1990, the town’s population was stagnant at 1,472. By 2000, Postville had grown 64 percent, to 2,273, and today its population is 2,352. Unofficial estimates place the population closer to 2,600, about one-quarter Hispanic.

When I started reporting on Postville in the mid-1990s, the kosher slaughterhouse owners flatly told me they preferred to hire Eastern Europeans over Hispanics. Most workers on the kill floor then were neither Jews nor locals, but Russians, Ukrainians, Kazakhs, Bosnians, and Poles. Many lived in trailer courts on the outskirts of town or in small apartments downtown that five or six men rented together. Some would hang out at the Club 51 tavern on Lawler Street, which cashed workers’ paychecks. When I walked

into Club 51 one Friday evening, the cigarette smoke was so dense that I couldn't see from one end of the bar to the other. Weary Russian and Ukrainian men, chatting in their native tongues, stopped in for quick shots of vodka. At Spice-N-Ice Liquors down the block, there was an astonishing array of vodka for sale: 24 brands and types from Russia, Denmark, Sweden, and Finland. I felt I wasn't in rural America at all, but in a working-class Eastern European neighborhood after the factory whistle had blown.

Today, Eastern Europeans by and large have stopped coming to Postville. The slaughterhouse jobs are too menial and the pay too low. Most of these workers have begun the process of mainstreaming into larger cities in the state—Des Moines, Cedar Rapids, Dubuque. At Spice-N-Ice, the vodka has given way to Mexican beers and tequilas, but the store's owner says most Mexicans he sees prefer American products such as Budweiser beer and Black Velvet whiskey.

Like the Mexicans from Villachuato who have emigrated to Marshalltown, many of the slaughterhouse workers in Postville come from a single Mexican village, in this case El Barril, a town of 2,300 in the state of San Luis Potosí, 300 miles north of Mexico City. Postville also has become a destination for scores of Guatemalans, who, unlike Mexican workers, often bring their families and show little intention of moving back to their native country.

Like many onetime immigrant communities, from New York's Lower East Side to Los Angeles' Boyle Heights, the areas of Postville that once belonged to locals, and later to Eastern Europeans, now have given way to Latino immigrants. Newcomers who don't live in trailers or storefront apartments in town find their way to a complex of newly built but already deteriorating duplexes and apartment buildings north of town. At least 225 workers—about a third Guatemalans and two-thirds Mexicans—live in the complex. A sparsely furnished two-bedroom apartment rents for about \$400 a month, says one of the land-

lords, Kermit Miller. A Pentecostal church is scheduled to be built within the complex in the next six months. (About half of Postville's Guatemalans are Pentecostals, who for now meet in the basement of the Presbyterian church for services.)

Many Hispanics gather at the two Mexican restaurants in town, Sabor Latino and Red Rooster (which serves Tex-Mex food). On Saturdays, when Agri-Processors shuts down, the coin-operated Laundromat in town, Family Laundry, is a busy place. There's also a new Mexican clothing store, El Vaquero (the Cowboy), which sells sombreros, Mexican-style baby clothes and dresses (particularly for baptisms and *quinceañeras*), shirts, and Mexican flags. Every night, scores of Mexican men play soccer in an open field at the edge of town.

**ONCE THEY ARRIVE, learning local
Midwestern culture is nearly impossible
for most outsiders.**

Attempts to Americanize Hispanic immigrants generally begin in school programs designed to teach English to children of workers who do bring their families. This approach has produced mixed results. In Postville, the influx of immigrants has spurred a white flight of Anglo students to outlying school districts. Superintendent David Strudthoff doesn't mince words when he says white parents who pull their children out of the school district are engaging in "ethnic cleansing." To prevent the student body's ethnic makeup from becoming more lopsided, Postville created a desegregation plan in 2003 that allows two Anglo students to transfer out of the district only if one new immigrant student matriculates.

Immigration is a double-edged sword in small towns such as Postville. This fall, the Postville Community School District will receive \$5,141 per year per Anglo student, which comes from property taxes and state education coffers. But for each immigrant student, the state will chip in an additional appropri-

ation that goes toward hiring teachers to provide English-language instruction, bringing the total to \$6,272. For Hasidic families in Postville who send their children to the yeshiva in town, the school district will realize \$3,084 per student. More than a third of the 578 students currently enrolled in Postville's public schools are immigrant children. The proportion of immigrants is 14 percent in high school and 29 percent in middle school. In the town's elementary school, it jumps to 55 percent.

In an era when rural schools are consolidating because of dwindling enrollments, Postville school numbers are strong. Since 1999 the district has received grants of more than \$2 million from government agen-

FIRST THE HASIDIM reopened the long-defunct slaughterhouse and made it hum, and now Hispanics have converged on Postville to work there.

cies earmarked for a variety of purposes, but, says Strudthoff, all are based on the increased number of immigrant children attending Postville schools. The latest grant requires a dual-track language program. Starting in the fall, all Postville kindergarten students will receive mandatory half-day immersion instruction in both Spanish and English, and Spanish-language training will be required for all students in each subsequent grade level through high school.

For the most part, rural American towns have always been self-contained extended families, with just about every resident white and Christian. For many Iowans, shared faith is the litmus test for acceptance. Since many Hispanic immigrants are Catholic, religion is one area where relatively little assimilation would appear necessary. Most natives in this part of Iowa are Lutherans, but many towns have a Catholic church as well. In part to attract this younger, emerging constituency, several years ago the priest at St. Bridget's Church, Paul Ouderkirk, decided to cele-

brate Mass once a week in Spanish.

More than a few local parishioners retaliated by taking their prayers 10 miles down Highway 18 to St. Patrick's Church in Monona, where Mass is strictly an English-language affair. "A small group told me that the migrants were stealing our Mass," Father Ouderkirk told me recently. "They said their ancestors built the church, and because of that, they deserved all Masses to be in their language." Another group of Anglo parishioners took a different tack, said Ouderkirk. "They said that if I continued with Mass in Spanish, I'd be catering to the Hispanics, and they'd never move away." Ouderkirk is now retired, but he returns to Postville to celebrate one Spanish Mass a week.

Postville is still the kind of community where parents drop their kids off at the municipal pool on Wilson Street to swim all day long without worry. Everyone's phone number still starts with the same 864 prefix. But the insulated nature of the town is changing. Residents lock

their doors now—both front and back. Crime isn't rampant, but it's more common than it was 10 years ago, when on a summer night residents would leave their car engines running while they popped into Casey's convenience store on Tilden for a cherry ICEE.

A large number of single Hispanic men in their twenties live in Postville with little to do but work, sleep, and hang out. As in other meatpacking communities, few have high school educations. They belong to the demographic group with the highest incidence of criminal activities, write rural anthropologists Michael J. Broadway and Donald D. Stull.

Since 2000, there have been one murder and three attempted murders involving Postville immigrants. Drugs are a reminder of the influx of newcomers. Authorities suspect that the Mississippi River town of Prairie Du Chien, 26 miles away, is a hub for drug trafficking. In June, Postville police and the Clayton County sheriff's office were instrumental in a bust in Rockford, Illinois, that yielded 625 pounds of mari-



Hasidic Jews are a common sight on the once-homogenous streets of Postville, which has become home to the most rabbis per capita outside of Jerusalem. A member of an ultra-orthodox Hasidic Jewish sect operates the world's largest kosher slaughterhouse there, which has altered life in the tiny town.

juana. Drunk-driving arrests in Postville went from two in 1992 to 36 last year. Domestic trouble calls to the police in 1992 totaled 32; last year there were triple that number.

In every community, cultural norms are tested when newcomers arrive. When five local high school boys gather on a Postville street corner on a Saturday night and wave at a local girl driving her dad's pickup, that's OK. In fact, it's what everyone expects. But when five Hispanic guys on a corner whistle at the same girl? This can stretch community tolerance, leading to talk of Hispanic gangs, not to mention the endangered virginity of heartland daughters.

Politicians have exploited such fears with varying degrees of success. Steve King, a Republican congressman from the western quadrant of the state, blames

immigrants for many of Iowa's ills, employing some fairly vitriolic rhetoric. "Thousands of Americans die at the hands of illegal aliens every year," one of King's press releases reads. "Every murder, every rape, every violent gang crime committed against Americans by illegal aliens is an utterly preventable crime." King is riding a crest of conservative anti-immigrant support in Iowa. A bill now pending in the Iowa legislature would prevent banks from awarding home mortgages to illegal immigrants. The state supreme court ruled in 2005 that undocumented persons are not eligible for driver's licenses. The net impact is that many undocumented workers drive illegally, with no insurance.

In Postville, some members of the city council appear frustrated by the indelible impact of newcomers. First the Hasidim came to town and reopened the long-defunct slaughterhouse and made it hum, and now Hispanics have converged on Postville to work there. In

May, the *Postville Herald-Leader* published this letter to the editor, written by a council member:

A diversity of values is at the core of what some want to call racist or bigots or anti-Semite. One group wants to isolate itself, by dressing a little differently, keeping their children out of our public schools and wanting a different day for the Sabbath. They generally will not eat in other establishments. Another group here sends money back to other foreign countries and brings with it a lack of respect for our laws and culture which contribute to unwed mothers, trash in the streets, unpaid bills, drugs, forgery, and other crimes. We also have savvy employers that hire people at the lowest possible rates to obtain the greatest value to their company, which in turn contributes to overcrowded housing and increased use of public services and lowers the standard of living.

The following week, the newspaper published several responses, including one signed by 13 community leaders, repudiating the letter.

In a community that awards a yard-of-the-month certificate, many locals are irritated by how messy they perceive the newcomers—Hispanic and Hasidic—to be. Lawns are often not mowed and garbage sometimes is strewn in front yards. Some immigrants don't hang curtains over their windows. Dilapidated cars are parked on some front lawns. Lowriders with the bass turned up rattle windows. Parties, often thrown by Hispanics, are so loud that the council last year authorized the purchase of a decibel reader so police could issue citations.

Unless something wholly unexpected happens, more and more immigrants will stream into rural America. Some will return home after a few months and never come back; others will be itinerant workers, coming and going, in constant flux; many will stay and become part of the evolving social fabric of the rural United States. A separate group, already Americanized, will not arrive directly from their homelands, but from crowded coastal cities, seeking middle-class opportunities—buying up property and starting businesses. Other newcomers, like the Hasidim in Postville, will be members of cohesive religious groups that move to rural America because of afford-

able land and a longing for isolation.

“Pioneers go places civilized people shun,” writes Iowa historian Michael J. Bell. “And they tend to go there, wherever ‘there’ is, because the one thing they can be sure of is that civilization is not there waiting to tell them how things ought to be done.” That’s why disciples of the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi incorporated a community in 2001 near Fairfield, Iowa, 200 miles south of Postville, and called it Vedic City, where more than 150 homes, topped with small gold-colored vessels, face east, and community-wide meditation sessions take place twice a day. It’s why more than 125 families belonging to a cult called the Old Believers—which in dress and custom attempts to mimic life in 17th-century Russia—settled in rural Erskine, Minnesota, in 1998. And it’s why Mennonites have moved into the north-central Iowa town of Riceville, buying up local businesses and starting their own school.

The common thread running through slaughterhouse boomtowns, casino outposts, and revivalist communities is opportunity—whether rooted in economics or in faith. The stories of these small towns are parables of change in rural America, where unplanned and uncontrolled social experiments are taking place. This aging, long-neglected region is being defined anew by a pioneer mentality sustained by young blood and vitality. Power is seldom relinquished easily, and many of these rural towns are, or will be, battlegrounds for acrimonious power struggles.

People in rural America have gotten along just fine for more than 150 years. But times have changed. The only way the natives of these insular communities will gain traction as their own numbers continue to dwindle is to forge power alliances with newcomers. How successfully thousands of rural towns enfold newcomers into a workable social structure foreshadows how the greater American society will be able to incorporate larger and larger blocs of new Americans who increasingly demand to be defined on their own terms.

Immigrants by nature are pioneers—as American as Huck Finn, who reckoned he had “to light out for the Territory ahead of the rest.” That’s what immigrants do. A sense of purpose and adventure pushes them to seek their futures in unfamiliar and distant places, while others back home, perhaps more timid, choose to stay put. It is in getting to such faraway places, often in tiny rural towns, and staking their claim, that these new pioneers are forever changing the rules of America—and of becoming American. ■

In ESSENCE

REVIEWS OF ARTICLES FROM PERIODICALS AND SPECIALIZED JOURNALS HERE AND ABROAD

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FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

The Attack of the Killer Unknown

THE SOURCE: "You Never Know(ism)" by Benjamin H. Friedman and Harvey M. Sapolsky, in *Breakthroughs*, Spring 2006.

CHAOS, ENEMIES, DISORDER, civil war, terrorism, attackers, and pirates are all out there, waiting to pounce on vulnerable Americans. Who and where? Well, You Never Know.

You Never Know is the enemy, write Benjamin H. Friedman, a doctoral student, and Harvey M. Sapolsky, a professor of public policy and organization, respectively, at MIT. You Never Know is all powerful. You Never Know can't be beaten. No number of weapons is sufficient. No threat too preposterous. No enemy too weak. No plot too implausible. You Never Know.

Read the latest defense planning document, the *Quadrennial Defense Review*. The United States now faces a hostile mix of terrorists, national failures, civil insurgencies, missiles, and bloated militaries.

America must plan to defeat all of them. You Never Know.

Actually, argue the authors, today's Americans are probably the most secure people in history. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan do not endanger the American homeland. Terrorists are a threat, but they kill only a fraction of the number of people who die each year from the flu.

You Never Know is out there, waiting to pounce on vulnerable Americans.

Their attacks since 2001 have been conventional and local, and most of the terrorists do not live nearby.

Predictions of terror attacks understate the complexities of making, transporting, and detonating biological and nuclear weapons. Worries about the theft of ready-made nukes are real but probably exaggerated. Most Soviet weapons

were apparently built with components that should have deteriorated by now. Rogue states are fewer.

Libya and Iraq are neutralized. The remaining such countries, North Korea, Iran, and Syria, are far away.

China may never be able to spend even half of what the United States does on defense. Right now it spends one-tenth.

Everyone involved in national security focuses on eliminating threats rather than assessing the likelihood of their occurrence. While Friedman and Sapolsky don't see a deliberate effort to exaggerate the peril, they say media coverage causes the public to develop an exaggerated sense of danger.

You Never Knowism is a product of politics. In a democracy, government expenses require justification. Threats justify budgets, so strategies sell threats. This is not deliberate dishonesty. It is organizational culture.

Uncertainty and ignorance are not sufficient grounds for precaution and costly defenses. Decisions should weigh the probability of danger, the cost of its realization, and the effectiveness and cost of countermeasures, the authors say. Skepticism should be employed, rather than endless dollars, to defend against . . . You Never Know.

FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

Facing Latin Facts

THE SOURCE: "Latin America's Left Turn" by Jorge G. Castañeda, in *Foreign Affairs*, May–June 2006.

THE PERUVIAN PRESIDENTIAL election that pitted Alan García against Ollanta Humala this past June highlighted two facts of life about Latin American politics. The region is thoroughly dominated by the political Left, and the Left itself is neatly divided into two competing groups. The winner in Peru, García, represents the "modern" Left, while Humala represents the resurgent "populist" tradition. The United States, argues Jorge G. Castañeda, former foreign minister of Mexico, has no choice but to support one of Latin America's two Lefts.

The spread of democracy beginning in the 1980s and the persistence of widespread poverty and inequality virtually foreordained the Left's rise. The market-oriented reforms and other policy changes that began in the middle of that decade failed to produce sufficient economic growth. "The impoverished masses," Castañeda says, "vote for the types of policies that, they hope, will make them less poor." The collapse of the Soviet Union helped by freeing leftist parties from charges of foreign control.

Both Latin Lefts emphasize social improve-

ment, fair distribution of wealth, national sovereignty, and (to varying degrees) democracy. The modern Left, however, took its original inspiration from the Bolshevik Revolution and has had a historical experience much like that of Europe's socialist parties. It has acknowledged its own past errors and those of its former role models, the Soviet Union and Cuba. It has a genuine commitment to democracy, emphasizes social policy within "an orthodox market framework," and values good relations with the United States and other Western countries. In recent years, that has been a formula for success in Left-governed countries such as Chile, where new president Michelle Bachelet continues a mod-

ern Left reign dating to 1990.

The populist Left, on the other hand, is a "peculiarly Latin American" phenomenon, whose ancestry includes such storied figures as Juan Perón, who came to power in Argentina in the 1940s. The contemporary populist resurgence began in 1998 with the election of Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez, who has since been joined by Néstor Kirchner in Argentina, Tabaré Vázquez in Uruguay, and, recently, Evo Morales in Bolivia. Populist leaders are waiting in the wings elsewhere, notably Mexico, where Andrés Manuel López Obrador has a good chance of winning this year's presidential election.

Although widely seen as champions of the working class, the populists have "no real domestic agenda." Stridently nationalistic, they are intent on picking fights with Washington in order to whip up popular support and on playing to the crowds by nationalizing industries such as oil and gas (which gives them control over vast revenues). Such economic policies as they have amount mostly to crony capitalism, and their respect for democracy, human rights, and the rule of law is tenuous at best.

Washington's best option is actively to support the "right Left," Castañeda argues. That means signing a free-trade deal with Chile, negotiating in earnest on trade with Brazil, and otherwise helping responsible leftists deliver the goods to

EXCERPT

Populism on the March

Whereas a Bolivian populist directs his fire at international energy companies, a British populist is more likely to target immigrants. The reason is that developing countries need foreign capital to grow, and that is what globalization gives them. By contrast, developed economies need foreign labor—ideally as productive as homegrown labor, but less expensive. Sometimes, of course, the reality is a bit more complicated. But, for voters concerned about their economic prospects—and for the politicians wooing them—globalization and its apparent foreign beneficiaries provide a convenient scapegoat for a host of economic anxieties. The result is that, around the world, populism is on the march.

—NIALL FERGUSON, a Harvard historian, and
SAMUEL A. JOHNSON, Ph.D candidate in Harvard's
government department, in *The New Republic* (June 19, 2006)

voters. The leaders of the “wrong Left,” meanwhile, need to be reminded of their countries’ commitments to democracy and human rights and of the imperative of continuing to build an “international legal order.” But Washington must “avoid the mistakes of the past,” even if that means allowing Chávez, for example, to acquire nuclear technology from Argentina, as long as international safeguards are in place. If it acts wisely, the United States could help the region “finally find its bearings.”

FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

The Northwest Passage at Last

THE SOURCE: “In the Dark and Out in the Cold” by Magda Hanna, in *Proceedings*, June 2006.

CAPTAIN HENRY HUDSON TRIGGERED a mutiny among his sailors nearly 400 years ago in the frigid bay bearing his name when he tried to get them to spend a second summer looking for a northern passage to the Orient. Now, scientists are saying that within decades this fabled Arctic sea route between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans may be open for routine use by commercial ships carrying oil and other products. Magda Hanna, a U.S. Navy lieutenant, warns that her service is unprepared and poorly equipped to navigate in such an environment.

Global warming appears to be melting the icecaps at the top of the globe with startling speed. Arctic ice has retreated northward by three percent a decade and thinned by 40 percent in the past 20 years, according to U.S. submarine surveys. The

Sailing through a thawed Northwest Passage could be as much as 40 percent faster than going by existing routes.

phenomenon appears likely to make two routes—the Northwest Passage and the Northern Sea Route, claimed as internal waters by, respectively, Canada and Russia—irresistible paths for shippers. Such shortcuts would be about 40 percent faster than existing routes, and save even more time for the huge tankers too big to fit through the Panama Canal.

The oil and gas reserves discovered under the Arctic have already made the area a leading economic development center for Russia, and multinational companies are continuing to explore in the Beaufort Sea off the coast of Alaska. As the world’s hunger for oil grows, the economic and transportation benefits of Arctic sea routes will surely increase. The Russians estimate that the volume of oil moving through the region will increase from one million to 100 million tons a year by 2015.

Meanwhile, the Navy has cut Arctic research funds and allowed its vessels to fall into such disrepair that it was forced to lease a Russian icebreaker to resupply a polar mission last year.

Writing in *Proceedings*, a publication of the nongovernmental U.S. Naval Institute, Hanna notes that regular northern sea runs are hardly likely to begin soon. While the passage can be navigated during one or more

months in the summer, unpredictable floating ice can make the transit perilous. According to the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment, years in the making, summer commercial shipping might be possible “within several decades.” Prohibitive insurance costs now rule out most uses of the routes.

Even so, the high probability of continued melting means that the region can no longer be ignored as a potential theater of military operations. The combination of disputed territorial claims, vast natural resources, and the ever-present requirements of homeland security could well create a need for an Arctic naval presence. Without planning, training, and ships, Hanna says, “the Navy’s lack of preparation could leave the United States in the dark and out in the cold.”

FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

The Crude Toll

THE SOURCE: “The First Law of Petropolitics” by Thomas L. Friedman, in *Foreign Policy*, May–June 2006.

THE HIGH PRICE OF OIL IS certainly not pleasant for the average driver, whose fill-up has doubled in price in less than four years. And it is clearly a burden for the American economy. But you might think that it would be a boon to oil-exporting nations as once-cheap oil bobs around the \$70-a-barrel mark.

However, you would be thinking completely backward under the First Law of Petropolitics, posited by author and *New York Times* columnist Thomas L. Friedman. His First Law holds that the price of oil and the pace of freedom always move

in opposite directions in oil-rich “petrolist” states. “The higher the average global crude oil price rises, the more free speech, free press, free and fair elections, an independent judiciary, the rule of law, and independent political parties are eroded,” he writes.

A petrolist state is a country whose economy rests on oil and has weak national institutions or an outright authoritarian government. Among the examples are Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Nigeria, Russia, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela. Friedman tests his theory by comparing oil prices to citizen freedoms.

Take Venezuela. When oil was in the \$10-to-\$20-a-barrel range, the country’s oil industry was reopened to

foreign investment and a coup failed. But as the price rose to \$50, freedom shrank, according to an analysis by the research organization Freedom House.

Or Nigeria. When oil was hovering around \$23 a barrel, there was a boom in independent newspapers. As oil rose toward \$30, local elections were postponed indefinitely.

To explain the phenomenon, Friedman draws on work by UCLA political scientist Michael L. Ross. The oil bonanza relieves governments of the necessity of taxation that otherwise breeds popular demands for representation. It gives rulers plenty of cash for patronage, police, internal security, and other dangerous indulgences. It reduces pressure on citizens

to attain higher levels of education or to specialize in needed occupations—pursuits that can produce a more articulate, economically independent public that can keep the heat on an authoritarian government.

The tide of democracy and free markets that followed the collapse of the Berlin Wall is now running into a countercurrent of petro-authoritarianism, Friedman writes. This gives some of the worst regimes in the world extra cash with which to cause mischief.

And all of these negative impacts could poison global politics. Cutting oil consumption, he says, should not be the goal only of high-minded environmentalists. It is a national security imperative.

POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

What Kind of Nation?

THE SOURCE: “The Founding of Nations” by Wilfred M. McClay, in *First Things*, March 2006.

TODAY’S SWIRLING DEBATES OVER fundamental issues such as immigration, religion, and spreading democracy abroad have sparked a fresh crisis of identity in the United States. Forced “to think more deeply and clearly about who and what we are,” writes historian Wilfred McClay, Americans have looked instinctively to the past.

But what past will they find? For a century, historians and intellectuals have been busy hacking away at the “myths” of the Founding and at

the very notion that it exists as a unique historical moment. (For an example, see “Tom Paine’s Myth,” p. 80.) In this view, as McClay summarizes it, the Founding was the work of “flawed, unheroic, and self-interested white men [that] offers nothing to which we should grant any abiding authority.” It sees the Constitution as “a mere political deal meant to be superseded by other political deals.”

In attacking founding “myths,” historians are taking sides in the age-old tension between the respective roles of creed and culture in the making of American national identity. It’s a tension between “on the

one hand, the idea of the United States as a nation built on the foundation of self-evident, rational, and universally applicable propositions about human nature and human society; and, on the other hand, the idea of the United States as a very unusual, historically specific and contingent entity, underwritten by a long, intricately evolved, and very particular legacy of English law, language, and customs, Greco-Roman cultural antecedents, and Judeo-Christian sacred texts and theological and moral teachings.”

In attacking the legitimacy of the Founders, historians attempt to erase the cultural side of the equation, reducing American identity to all creed and no culture. That would leave nothing, according to McClay, but “abstract normative ideas about freedom and democracy and self-government that can flourish just as



Americans may tend to romanticize the Founders—as in *The Apotheosis of Washington*, which graces the U.S. Capitol rotunda—but many historians are eager to strip the Founding of all mythic dimensions.

easily in any cultural and historical soil, including a multilingual, post-religious, or post-national one.”

McClay, who teaches at the University of Tennessee, Chattanooga, is no partisan of a purely cultural view of American identity, and he thinks that American sentimentality about the Founding needs occasional correction, but debunking alone is not enough. Founding myths are not prettified fairy tales, as detractors think, but “a structure of meaning, a manner of giving a manageable shape to the cosmos.” And they are surprising in their moral complexity and capacity to instruct. Consider the often hair-raising creation myths of antiquity, such as the story of Romulus and Remus, the founders of Rome, or the Scriptural

account of the ups and downs of the “feckless” Israelites, who continually broke the laws of their covenant-making God. No American understood the value of the nation’s founding myths better than Abraham Lincoln, who summoned America to fulfill its ideals by invoking the “mystic chords of memory.”

As Lincoln understood, America’s founding myth “does not depend on a belief in the moral perfection of the Founders themselves,” McClay writes. “We should not try to edit out those stories’ strange moral complexity, because it is there for a reason. Indeed, it is precisely our encounter with the surprise of their strangeness that reminds us of how much we have yet to learn from them.”

POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

Partisan Fire

THE SOURCE: “Theory of Partisan Relativity” by Alan Ehrenhalt, in *Governing*, March 2006.

THE FEROCIOUS PARTISANSHIP in Washington has not stopped at the Capitol Beltway. It has swept state legislatures across the country, creating the same sense of dismay and resentment as the conflicts in the nation’s capital do, and a lot of Americans are saying they aren’t going to take it any more.

Last year, Oregon state senator Charlie Ringo, a Democrat from Beaverton, near Portland, got the Oregon Senate to pass legislation essentially eliminating political parties from state government. The Oregon governor, the attorney general, and all state officials and legislators would run on a ballot without party identification. Party caucuses and party leadership would no longer be needed.

In the end, the bill didn’t go anywhere in the Oregon House, but its Senate passage by a 2–1 margin suggested that Ringo was on to something that resonated with a sizable number of politicians. Then he retired unexpectedly earlier this year, saying, “The blind allegiance to party is killing us.”

In neighboring Washington, state treasurer Mike Murphy tried to get the legislature to make his own office nonpartisan. Murphy’s proposal lost, as did an effort to make county sheriffs nonpartisan officials, but his ideas are alive and kicking in Seattle and the state capital. In Colorado, two dozen first-

term legislators have started a bipartisan caucus to allay growing public resentment of partisan excess. Two California legislators are seeking to create a citizens' commission to reach the same goal. Sentiment that partisanship is out of hand is rife in Wisconsin and Minnesota as well.

There is no question that the past decade has brought a marked increase in partisan unpleasantness almost everywhere in the country, according to Alan Ehrenhalt, executive editor of *Governing*. But the sense that the phenomenon is new and shocking, a departure from a previous golden age of civility and goodwill, is wrong, he writes. Nasty partisanship has been around at least since Thomas Jefferson denounced Patrick Henry as having "an avaricious

EXCERPT

McCarthy's on the List

History is full of leaders—Danton, Trotsky, Nkrumah—who seemed to arrange their own destruction as Raskolnikov arranged his own exposure in Crime and Punishment. . . . The anti-leader type is the man (or woman) who has led and lost. He is that rare individual who can still evoke grand memories even as he now sounds an uncertain trumpet, stimulating a halfhearted and foredoomed charge. Continually flirting with self-destruction, he lives his private nightmares in public places. While winning, he plans his defeat. He suddenly loses his will to prevail at precisely the moment when one lightning-flash stroke would grant all he might have willed.

—ARNOLD BEICHMAN, research fellow at the Hoover Institution and the author of *Herman Wouk: The Novelist as Social Historian*, in *Policy Review* (Feb.–March 2006)

and rotten heart" and urged loyal Jeffersonians to "devoutly pray for his death."

Historically, there was indeed a

brief golden age of partisan harmony between 1945 and 1965. But it was achieved by what Northwestern University political scientist Jeffery A. Jenkins calls a "historical aberration." Much of the country, he said, was operating under a one-party system. Reformers had a solution for this state of affairs. They called, not for less partisanship, but more.

Ehrenhalt thinks that the epidemic of partisanship in the past decade has not been a good thing, but it's unrealistic to banish it from legislatures altogether. He takes his cue from George Washington, who wrote that partisanship is "a fire not to be quenched.

It demands a uniform vigilance to prevent its bursting into a flame, lest, instead of warming, it should consume."

ECONOMICS, LABOR & BUSINESS

Race and Real Estate

THE SOURCE: "The Creation of Homeownership: How New Deal Changes in Banking Regulation Simultaneously Made Homeownership Accessible to Whites and Out of Reach for Blacks" by Adam Gordon, in *The Yale Law Journal*, Oct. 2005.

AMERICA'S MODERN LOVE affair with real estate probably began in 1934, when Congress

created the Federal Housing Administration (FHA). Even though the nation was then in the grip of the Great Depression, the number of housing starts soared, rising from 93,000 in 1933 to 619,000 in 1941.

Before the FHA, Americans

needed substantial amounts of money—up to a third of the value of a home—to secure a mortgage. And what they got were, in effect, "balloon" mortgages; after five to seven years, buyers had to secure new loans or, in many cases, were forced to sell their homes.

The FHA revolutionized home finance by extending guarantees to qualified buyers, allowing them to borrow from banks at low rates for increasingly longer terms with down payments of only 10 percent.



In 1942, this African-American family was able to move into a federally built home in Detroit, but discriminatory mortgage practices effectively shut them out of private housing open to whites.

But the revolution bypassed an important group: African Americans. Whites were given a generation's head start on accumulating wealth through homeownership. Today, the median white household has 10 times as much wealth as the median black household.

The FHA, says Adam Gordon, a third-year law student and senior editor at *The Yale Law Journal*, established underwriting guidelines that were based on the racial makeup of a neighborhood. Areas with a greater proportion of whites, in the FHA model, were deemed to have stable, relatively high property values, while predominately black neighborhoods were assumed to have low values. This loan-granting model severely limited access to FHA mortgages for black Americans. In 1960, nonwhites held only 2.5 percent of FHA-insured loans.

This story is well known to scholars. What's disputed is how much difference the FHA policies actually

made. If there was sufficient demand among black home buyers, some scholars argue, private mortgage insurers would have stepped in to serve those excluded by the FHA. Gordon believes he has the explanation for why this did not happen: Because private lenders adopted the same flawed FHA lending model, their discriminatory criteria "effectively became binding law."

In November 1962, President John F. Kennedy signed an executive order directing the FHA to make its loans available regardless of "race, color, creed, or national origin." That order, and later reforms, such as the Fair Housing Act of 1968, put blacks on nearly

Three decades of discriminatory lending practices prevented many African Americans from building assets.

equal terms with whites when buying a home, but three decades of discrimination had already prevented many blacks from "becoming homeowners and building assets."

Gordon argues that further remedies are needed. Among the options are stepped-up attacks on exclusionary zoning and "mobility grants" for blacks in the form of direct payments—in effect, reparations—or mortgage subsidies. The straightforward anti-discrimination steps taken so far fail "to adequately address . . . the past disparity in wealth building" and its consequences—the segregated, depressed neighborhoods "that the FHA helped create."

ECONOMICS, LABOR & BUSINESS

Is Property Sacred?

THE SOURCE: "Did Insecure Property Rights Slow Economic Development? Some Lessons From Economic History" by Naomi R. Lamoreaux, in *The Journal of Policy History*, 2006: No. 1.

ONE ITEM STANDS ATOP THE list of reforms the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund push on developing nations as part of what's called the Washington Consensus: better guarantees of property rights. If the full force of the law isn't behind the principles that investors' assets can't be seized, that corporate accounting can't be tampered with, and that loans must be repaid on time and in full, then people will be reluctant to risk their hard-earned cash in a country's economy.

That logic seems incontestable,

observes Naomi R. Lamoreaux, an economist and historian at the University of California, Los Angeles, but it is contradicted by both history and the latest doings on the Web.

A few years ago, for example, an Oklahoma man plunked down \$750 for a nine-room stone house in a quaint seaside village—quite a deal, except that it was a virtual house that existed only in the Internet fantasy game *Ultima Online*. The buyer had no property rights whatsoever. Yet such virtual investments are becoming increasingly common in online games. *Wired* magazine's blog recently reported that a Miami man paid \$100,000 for a virtual space station resort, from which he hopes to make money.

The real world offers its own counterevidence. In late-19th-century America, investors poured millions into the country's rising corporations, even though minority shareholders enjoyed scant protection under the legal doctrines of the day. Corporate executives and majority owners (often a handful of people) were largely free to manipulate businesses to their own advantage. In 1850, for example, the Rhode Island Supreme Court stoutly upheld the New England Screw Company's sale of assets on favorable terms to another company largely controlled by New England

EXCERPT

The Curse of Innovation

New products often require consumers to change their behavior. . . . Many products fail because of a universal, but largely ignored, psychological bias: People irrationally overvalue benefits they currently possess relative to those they don't. The bias leads consumers to value the advantages of products they own more than the benefits of new ones. It also leads executives to value the benefits of innovations they've developed over the advantages of incumbent products.

That leads to a clash in perspectives: Executives, who irrationally overvalue their innovations, must predict the buying behavior of consumers, who irrationally overvalue existing alternatives. The results are often disastrous. Consumers reject new products that would make them better off, while executives are at a loss to anticipate failure. This double-edge bias is the curse of innovation.

—JOHN T. GOURVILLE, author of *Eager Sellers, Stony Buyers: Understanding the Psychology of New Product Adoption*, in *Harvard Business Review* (June 2006)

Screw's majority shareholders. American courts generally assumed that majority owners always acted in the best interests of the company.

Why did Americans (and others) continue to invest in the new corporations? Because the profit opportunities, despite the risks, were superior to the alternatives. Lamoreaux points out that the federal government had a great deal to do with creating those opportunities, through actions such as providing the legal authority and the “financial fillip” to build the nation-spanning railroads, opening public lands to

prospectors and others, and creating the U.S. Geological Survey to map those lands.

That brings Lamoreaux to the Beijing Consensus, an alternative to the Washington version that calls for a more active governmental role in economic development and less preoccupation with property rights. These will emerge “endogenously” over time, advocates say, as the beneficiaries of economic development become larger and more powerful, just as they did in the United States. And today's globalized economy adds another endogenous influence, since developing-country governments know that investors can easily go elsewhere if they completely trample property rights. Attracting those investors in the first place

with more profitable opportunities, Lamoreaux believes, ought to be priority number one.

ECONOMICS, LABOR & BUSINESS

A Queen's Whims

THE SOURCE: “What's in a Surname? The Effects of Surname Initials on Academic Success” by Liran Einav and Leeat Yariv, in *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Winter 2006.

ECONOMICS IS THE QUEEN OF the social sciences, and it owes much of its success to its hypothetical *homo economicus*, a

Archive password: CARDINAL

tireless soldier who has colonized other disciplines by seeming to point the way toward understanding the rational basis of human behavior. However, there has been an outbreak of irrationality in the queen's own court: alphabetical discrimination.

According to Liran Einav and Leeat Yariv, economists at Stanford and the California Institute of Technology, respectively, the awful truth is that professors at the nation's top university economics departments are more likely to have tenure if their last names begin with a letter toward the beginning of the alphabet. In the top 10 departments, every letter that brings a professor closer to A increases the chance of tenure by more than half a percent.

Tenure isn't the only privilege

affected by alphabeticism. The advantage climbs to nearly a full one percent per letter in being named a fellow of the prestigious Econometric Society. Being closer to A may even get economists closer to the Nobel Prize.

Of course, there's a rational explanation for all this, and it appears to reside in an oddly irrational tradition among academic economists: When they publish multi-author articles, the authors are listed in alphabetical order. Not only do those closest to A get the benefit of top billing, they enjoy a monopoly of attention in all subsequent citations of the article, which give only the first author's name followed by "et al."

Because there's been a steep increase in multi-author economics articles in recent years, Einav

and Yariv guessed that alphabetical discrimination wasn't common in the past, and that's exactly what they found: no alphabeticism as recently as 1990. What about other fields in which authors are not listed in alphabetical order? In one field they checked, psychology, there was no discrimination.

Curiously, alphabeticism also disappears outside the top economics departments. That may be because lower-ranked departments put more emphasis "on vitae and publication counts, while top departments care more about visibility and impact."

There are some obvious fixes for this little bit of irrationality—banning "et al.," for example—but Yariv may not wait for the invisible hand to work its magic. She's thinking of dropping the Y from her last name.

SOCIETY

Does the Death Penalty Deter?

THE SOURCE: "The Uses and Abuses of Empirical Evidence in the Death Penalty Debate" by John J. Donohue and Justin Wolfers, in *The Stanford Law Review*, 58:3.

AT THE HEART OF THE DEBATE about whether the United States should retain capital punishment is the question of whether it deters murder. Some argue that executing murderers may actually cause more murders by desensitizing society at large to killing. But over the years,

several studies have shown that killing convicted murderers does deter future murders. After reanalyzing the data used in the most prominent of these studies, however, Yale law professor John J. Donohue and Wharton business professor Justin Wolfers conclude that none of them demonstrates a clear deterrent effect.

Donohue and Wolfers tested the findings of original studies by cover-

ing a different time period, introducing comparison groups, changing the variables, and using other alternative analytical techniques. The fundamental difficulty with all these studies is that executions occur so rarely in the United States, they write. Thus, the number of homicides the death penalty can plausibly have caused or deterred cannot be reliably disentangled from the large year-to-year changes in the homicide rate caused by other factors.

One of the most often cited capital punishment studies is by economist Isaac Ehrlich, who changed the American debate with a 1975 analysis of national time-series data that led him to claim

that each execution saved eight lives. The Supreme Court had ruled three years earlier that existing death penalty statutes were unconstitutional, but a year after Ehrlich released his study, the Court ended the death penalty moratorium in *Gregg v. Georgia*.

Ehrlich's results have been questioned over the years. Though his study covered the years 1935 to 1969, his conclusion that the death penalty is a deterrent relied heavily on an upsurge in the homicide rate after 1962, combined with a fall in the execution rate during the same period. A 1978 National Academy of Sciences report pointed out that this "simple pairing" of more murders and fewer executions between 1963 and 1969 explained his results. For all of his sophisticated econometric analyses, Ehrlich did not fully take into account other influences on the homicide rate.

In a 2004 study, Hashem Dezhbakhsh and Joanna M. Shepherd analyzed the same kind of data Ehrlich considered for the period 1960 to 2000 and suggested that around 150 fewer homicides occur per execution. But this study included the same distorting mid-1960s period. And Dezhbakhsh and Shepherd's case was also helped by the fact that homicide rates were higher during the death penalty moratorium in the mid-1970s than during the early or late years of the decade. The obvious implication that lifting the death penalty explains the difference, however, is contradicted by the fact that there was also an upsurge in murders in states where the

death penalty laws did not change.

Another problem with studies such as these two is that their conclusions don't hold up when examined against comparison cases, say Donohue and Wolfers. Canada hasn't executed anyone since 1962, though narrow death penalty statutes remained on the books until 1998. Yet Canada's homicide rate has moved in virtual lockstep with that of the United States. And within the United States, homicide rates in the six states that had no death penalty between 1960 and 2000 moved in close concert with those of states that did have death

An oft-cited 1975 death penalty study estimated that each execution saved eight lives, but many researchers have questioned that conclusion over the years.

penalty statutes in effect during at least some portion of that period.

Despite efforts to control for a range of social and economic trends, say Donohue and Wolfers, the studies failed to capture some of the factors that influence homicide rates. Of the half-dozen or so studies that Donohue and Wolfers scrutinized, none produced statistically significant evidence of deterrence upon re-examination.

Noting the impact of such studies on public policy, the authors caution against rushing to change the law based on any study that hasn't stood the test of time and rigorous scientific validation.

SOCIETY

Who Said It?

THE SOURCE: "The Quote Verifier" by Ralph Keyes, in *The Antioch Review*, Spring 2006.

AS MARK TWAIN NEVER PUT IT, "Quotations are only as good as the writers who invent them." And "there's the rub," as William Shakespeare *did* write (*Hamlet* 3.1.65), although who's to say he didn't cadge that line from someone else?

Ralph Keyes, whose work as the author of such books as *The Wit and Wisdom of Harry Truman* (1995) and *The Wit and Wisdom of Oscar Wilde* (1999) has made him a quote sleuth, says there are many reasons why "accurate ascription of quotations is such a slippery slope of scholarship." Take Leo Durocher's famous saying, "Nice guys finish last." What Durocher actually said was "The nice guys are all over there. In seventh place." The more familiar quote is, as Keyes writes, "boiled down to its essence," just like "blood, sweat, and tears" sounds better than Winston Churchill's original: "blood, toil, tears, and sweat."

At least those flawed sayings are associated with their originators. Misattribution of quotes is just as common as misquotation, reports Keyes. On the eve of the war in Iraq, for instance, the familiar quote "No plan survives contact with the enemy" was much bandied about by commentators. It was ascribed, variously, to Dwight Eisenhower, Napoleon, and George Patton. Prussian field

marshal Helmuth von Moltke (1848–1916) was the actual originator, though, like Durocher, von Moltke didn't put the thought in very pithy form.

President John F. Kennedy was a serial misquoter. "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing," he ringingly declared, (mis)citing Edmund Burke. It certainly *sounds* like something Burke might have said, and Kennedy's imprimatur has kept that fiction alive. (The true provenance of the quote is unknown.) Keyes says many misquotes follow patterns. If it's something saintly, then Gandhi said it (or Mother Teresa).

"If it's about honesty, Lincoln most likely said it (or Washington), about fame, Andy Warhol (or Daniel Boorstin), about courage, John Kennedy (or Ernest Hemingway)." Parochialism also plays a role. "Winning isn't everything, it's the only thing," said football coach Vince Lombardi (if you're American) or soccer coach Bill Shankly (if you're British). "Golf is a good walk spoiled" is "given to Mark Twain in the United States," says Keyes, and to "author Kurt Tucholsky in Germany."

Newspaper reporters routinely improve the grammar, diction, and, yes, the thoughts of those

they quote: Vice President Jack Garner compared his office to "a pitcher of warm piss," but in the newspapers it was sanitized to "a pitcher of warm spit." And while such misquotes might have had limited reach in former times, today the Internet does more to abet misquotation than contain it, spreading each error like a "verbal virus."

But there's nothing new about misquotation. The New York wit Dorothy Parker was so often credited for things she didn't actually say that the playwright George S. Kaufman once lamented, "Everything I've ever said will be attributed to Dorothy Parker."

PRESS & MEDIA

Coverage That Kills

THE SOURCE: "Are News Reports of Suicide Contagious? A Stringent Test in Six U.S. Cities" by Daniel Romer, Patrick E. Jamieson, and Kathleen H. Jamieson, in *Journal of Communication*, June 2006.

IT'S OFTEN HARD TO SAY HOW strongly the news media affect the behavior of individuals, but in one instance the influence is surprisingly clear: Media coverage of suicides encourages more people to take their own lives.

A dozen studies point clearly in this direction, showing that front-page stories and those involving celebrities are most likely to motivate others to take their own lives. Yet each of these earlier studies had limitations, note Daniel

Romer, Patrick E. Jamieson, and Kathleen H. Jamieson, all researchers at the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg Public Policy Center. They took a close statistical look at the experience in six cities over a four-month period, aiming to sort out the influence of everything from local news broadcasts to soap operas and movies.

They found that media attention to suicides led to 21 additional deaths, or 2.5 percent of all such deaths in the six cities. The suicides occurred among the youngest and oldest age groups. People in the 25-to-44 age group were *less* likely to commit suicide

in the days after one was reported.

Not guilty of influencing suicides, say the authors, were national television news, movies, and soap operas. Coverage in local newspapers and news shows accounted for virtually all of the increase.

Social scientists who have studied the phenomenon aren't sure how to explain this "contagion effect." Some troubled people may identify with celebrities or others who kill themselves; some may feel less inhibited when public attention is focused on what is normally a socially proscribed act. The authors don't suggest that the news media stop reporting suicides, but journalists could "reduce the potential for suicidal imitation by downplaying the romantic or sensational aspect of suicide deaths as well as the implication that suicide resolves problems for the victim."

PRESS & MEDIA

Tom Paine's Myth

THE SOURCE: "Disseminating *Common Sense*: Thomas Paine and the Problem of the Early National Bestseller" by Trish Loughran, in *American Literature*, March 2006.

THOMAS PAINE'S POLITICAL pamphlet *Common Sense* (1776), an impassioned argument for independence from Great Britain, has become a revered artifact of America's founding, often cited as evidence of a thriving early American print culture that connected isolated towns and frontier settlers. *Common Sense* was widely reproduced in the colonies in the lead-up to the Declaration of Independence to become the nation's first bestseller.

In an 1898 history, Henry Cabot Lodge said that 120,000 copies of Paine's pamphlet were sold in three months. "This means that almost every American able to read," wrote Lodge, "had read 'Common Sense.'"

Or so goes the myth, says Trish Loughran, an assistant English professor at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. In fact, Paine himself produced the often-repeated estimate of 120,000, apparently based on little more than his own self-interested speculation. *Common Sense* was indeed a sensation in Philadelphia, the colonies' biggest city

and their cultural center. But far from being reproduced "in every colony and town," as Lodge and others have written, it was reprinted in 14 towns in only seven of the 13 colonies, and in only one town south of Philadelphia. The highly localized colonial economy and the difficulty of mass distribution, particularly of luxuries such as printed matter, meant that pamphlets such as Paine's were seldom distributed outside their area of origin.

The reception and distribution of *Common Sense*, far from being a grass-roots, spontaneous phenomenon, Loughran adds,

was engineered by a cadre of elites including Benjamin Rush, Benjamin Franklin, and Samuel Adams who wanted to spread the pamphlet's ideas without risking their standing by attaching their own names to it.

So why has the myth of *Common Sense* as the colonies' *Da Vinci Code* endured? None of the historians who wrote in the years immediately after the Revolution mentions *Common Sense* as a decisive factor in the decision to separate from Britain. But later historians, such as Lodge, adopted a new standard for writing history, tending to rely on an accruing archive of official state papers, writes Loughran. Early American history came to be constructed around texts, exaggerating the role of the written word.

At the same time, the miraculous version of the story of *Common Sense*'s rise served certain political ends. "The myth of the best-seller thus enables that most democratic of fictions—the belief that all the people were (or could be) equally present at the scene of their subjection, all interested and invested readers in a common culture of consent," writes Loughran. That conception of the United States as a unified "We, the people" remains a pillar of America's identity.

EXCERPT

No Mortals, Please

In the late '70s, when I was trying to figure out what to do with my life, I went to visit a family friend named Scott Newhall. Scott's best known as the man who edited The San Francisco Chronicle in the 1950s and '60s, but when I went to see him, he was running a small-town paper called The Newhall Signal. After saying hello, I asked him what it took to be a journalist. He looked at me for a minute and then asked if I was the Messiah.

"What?" I said, somewhat perplexed.

"Are you the Messiah or not?"

"OK, fine, you caught me," I said after a long pause.

"That's a good sign," he said. "Because nobody ever made it in journalism without thinking he was the Messiah."

—JOHN NIELSEN, an environmental correspondent for National Public Radio, on the Mixed Signals blog at NPR.org (June 6, 2006)

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

The Fascist Faithful

THE SOURCE: "Hail Mosley and F- 'Em All': Martyrdom, Transcendence, and the 'Myth' of Internment" by Graham D. Macklin, in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, March 2006.

IN NOVEMBER 1945, A CROWD of nearly a thousand hysterically cheering supporters greeted Sir Oswald Mosley at London's Royal Hotel. What made the event remarkable was that Mosley was Britain's leading fascist, and that he had just emerged from five years of wartime detention. Amazingly, his political career was not over.

Mosley (1896–1980) formed the British Union of Fascists in 1932 and was interned by the British government along with more than 800 other party activists in the spring of 1940, as British troops faced Hitler's onslaught on the Continent. The long internment deprived the party of what little mass following it had and broke the spirit of many detained activists, writes Graham D. Macklin, a visiting honorary fellow at the University of Southampton's Parkes Institute for the Study of Jewish/Non-Jewish Relations, but it proved a crucible for others. It's a story "not without contemporary relevance" to the case of today's interned Taliban and Al Qaeda suspects.

From the start, Mosley's movement was as much religious as it was political. "The Leader," as he was called, held out a "powerful redemp-

tive vision of self-sacrifice and of martyrdom to achieve a national and racial rebirth—both drawing heavily upon the metaphors, mysticism, and symbolism of Christianity."

At one internment camp, Mosley's followers were allowed to hold a dinner celebrating the anniversary of the founding of their party. When a toast was proposed, one of them wrote later, a life-size portrait of the Leader was unveiled. "The whole audience . . . burst forth with as passionate a cry of salutation—Hail Mosley!—as I have ever heard."

"Ideological re-dedication was often accompanied by . . . a sense of

spiritual cleansing or personal rebirth for the activist," says Macklin. Mosley himself said after the war, "We have not lost, we've gained, we've won." The fascist leader compared his own captivity with that of Adolf Hitler in 1923—a cathartic purification along the path to ultimate victory. (Hitler himself, a guest at Mosley's 1936 wedding, said during the war that the British fascists might still help turn the tide in his favor.)

When Mosley went on after 1945 to found a new political party with the unlikely goal of European unification, many followers fell in step. He ran for Parliament twice after being released, and six years after his death a group of his old acolytes started marking his birthday every year.

As the British writer Rebecca West put it, "Only death cures such obstinacy."



Fascist leader Oswald Mosley is saluted by his followers at a London gathering in the early 1950s, when his Union Movement claimed hundreds of adherents. Mosley twice ran for Parliament after World War II.

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

Divine Politics

THE SOURCE: "The Sword of the Lord: How 'Otherworldly' Fundamentalism Became a Political Power" by George Marsden, in *Books & Culture*, March–April 2006.

SO PERVERSIVE IS THE INFLUENCE of the Religious Right on contemporary American politics that it is sometimes hard to remember that the deep involvement of evangelical Protestants in politics dates only to the 1970s. Earlier in the 20th century, a few prominent preachers campaigned against alcohol or communism, but as a group, evangelists were largely inert politically. Mainline Protestants criticized them endlessly for their inward-looking emphasis on conversion and the private practice of faith.

According to George Marsden, a historian at the University of Notre Dame and author of *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (2nd ed., 2005), it was the South's gradual integration into the American mainstream that propelled fundamentalists into public life. Until the mid-20th century, the fundamentalism preached by Southern Baptists and other evangelicals fit snugly into a "custodial" role in insular Southern culture, allowing them to ride herd on public morality. The turmoil of the civil rights era all but guaranteed that any evangelical forays onto the national political scene would be tainted by charges of racism, but other developments were already pushing believers from their provincial cocoon. Marsden cites a massive migration that occurred from the 1930s through the '50s, when white Southerners carried their values

north and west across America. Evidence of its effect can be seen in the breakthrough success of Billy Graham's 1949 Los Angeles crusade, in the grass-roots support for Barry Goldwater's 1964 presidential campaign, and in the successful California gubernatorial run of Ronald Reagan in 1966. "From that time on," writes Marsden, "it would be difficult to find an aspect of renewed religious and cultural militancy of the emerging Religious Right that did not have a major southern component."

Something still held back the fundamentalists' political tide, however. In 1965, a young Jerry Falwell delivered a sermon titled "Ministers and Marchers" in response to growing calls to respond to antiwar demonstrations: Evangelical Christians must "preach the Word," Falwell exhorted, not "reform the externals." It was not until the late 1960s and early '70s, says Marsden, that "changes in standards for public decency, aggressive second-wave feminism, gay activism, and challenges to conventional family structures" spurred evangelicals to greater political engagement. (Evangelical opinion on abortion, he notes, remained divided until the late 1970s.) Perhaps inspired by the crusade of Phyllis Schlafly (a Catholic) against the Equal Rights Amendment during the early 1970s, and disillusioned by "born again" President Jimmy Carter, whom they had supported, fundamentalists finally flexed their political muscle in 1979 with the founding of Falwell's Moral Majority.

As fundamentalists asserted themselves, it was precisely their character as moralizing "outsiders," says Marsden, that allowed them to rail against America as the new Baby-

lon while simultaneously proclaiming it God's chosen nation. Their historical experience kept America's fundamentalists from following in the path of other militant religious groups, such as Islamists. The Baptist tradition from which most American fundamentalism springs has always stressed separation of church and state. And in America's revolutionary period, Protestants were closely allied with the national cause, unlike the status quo religious groups of Europe, for example. Thus, while American fundamentalists are not especially more pacific than their Islamic counterparts, because of their unique historical experience they are perfectly comfortable with exhorting their nation to act as "an agency used by God in literal warfare against the forces of evil." It's a slippery, complicated path, and Marsden ends with a reminder that the Bible is filled with cautionary stories about mixing political power and influence with "unambiguous moral obligations."

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

Ungodless Nation

THE SOURCE: "Atheists as 'Other': Moral Boundaries and Cultural Membership in American Society" by Penny Edgell, Joseph Gerteis, and Douglas Hartmann, in *American Sociological Review* (April 2006).

IN AN ERA OF INCREASING religious tolerance, only one group of Americans approaches something like pariah status: atheists.

In a survey of more than 2,000 people, nearly 40 percent said that atheists, much more so than Muslims and homosexuals, did not agree "at all" with their vision of American society, report Penny

Edgell, Joseph Gerteis, and Douglas Hartmann, all sociologists at the University of Minnesota. Just under half of those polled said that they would disapprove if one of their children wanted to marry an atheist. A third said they would disapprove of a Muslim spouse.

Churchgoers, conservative Protestants, and people who say that religion is highly salient to their lives are less likely to approve of intermarriage with nonbelievers and more likely to say that atheists do not share their vision of American society. White Americans, males, and college graduates are somewhat more accepting of atheists than are nonwhites, females,

and people without college degrees. Not surprisingly, the lowest rate of rejection of atheists is among those who do not go to church or claim a religious identity, and who report that religion is “not at all” salient to them. Yet even 17 percent of these survey respondents say that atheists do not at all share their vision of America, and one-tenth indicate that they would disapprove of their child marrying an atheist.

It may come as a surprise that nonbelievers are actually hard to find. Only about one percent of Americans self-identify as atheists, though the real number may be up to three percent. And the members of this small band would be hard to

identify, since there are no visible signs of nonbelief.

The attitude toward these godless few is telling, write the authors. “If we are correct, then the boundary between the religious and the nonreligious is not about religious affiliation per se. It is about the historic place of religion in American civic culture and the understanding that religion provides the ‘habits of the heart’ that form the basis of the good society. It is about an understanding that Americans share something more than rules and procedures, but rather that our understandings of right and wrong and good citizenship are also shared.”

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

How to Save the Internet

THE SOURCE: “The Generative Internet” by Jonathan L. Zittrain, in *Harvard Law Review*, May 2006.

FOR ALMOST AS LONG AS THERE has been an Internet, enthusiasts have worried that it would be ruined by the intrusion of commerce. Now, that nightmare is closer than ever to being realized. It’s not corporate ogres or bloodsucking regulators that pose the chief danger, according to Jonathan L. Zittrain, a professor of Internet governance and regulation at Oxford University. It’s us.

Today’s rapidly proliferating threats to Internet security have the potential to provoke a backlash among computer users, creating consumer demand for protective

measures that would fundamentally change the nature of the Internet. Some corporations and regulators would be glad to satisfy this demand.

The key to the Internet’s enormous “generativity” has been unimpeded access of one end user to another, writes Zittrain, allowing “upstart innovators to demonstrate and deploy their genius to large audiences.” Virtually every innovation, from Amazon.com to Wikipedia, MySpace, and Skype, has depended on the creators’ ability to send executable code as well as data to the user’s personal computer. But that accessibility also opens the door to danger, as the experience of

CERT, an independent Internet security organization based at Carnegie Mellon University, graphically illustrates. In 1988, it began documenting the number of virus and worm attacks on Internet systems, and it was easy work until the late 1990s. In 2004, however, CERT announced that it was giving up: Attacks had quadrupled in just a few years.

Zittrain sees several possible routes to a more secure but less “generative” Internet that might tempt consumers. For instance, the personal computer could morph into an “information appliance,” running only programs loaded by its manufacturer. That’s not far-fetched. TiVo video recorders, Xbox game consoles, and Web-enabled smartphones are among the devices that already fit this description.

The recent spread of automatic software updating via the Internet

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Anything Goes

THE SOURCE: “Federal Neglect: Regulation of Genetic Testing” by Gail H. Javitt and Kathy Hudson, in *Issues in Science and Technology*, Spring 2006.

SUPPOSE YOU’RE A PREGNANT woman, and you read an advertisement touting a genetic test that can predict whether your unborn child might develop cystic fibrosis. Even though you know there are all kinds of potential threats to your child, you keep picturing that smiling woman holding her baby: *Wouldn’t it be better to be certain?*

As Gail H. Javitt and Kathy Hudson point out, such a test may not guarantee any clear answers. Javitt, a

Even if a genetic test is accurate, there are questions about how to interpret the results.

policy analyst at Johns Hopkins University’s Genetics and Public Policy Center and a researcher at the university’s Berman Bioethics Institute, and Hudson, who directs the center and is a professor at the institute, report that the federal government “exercises only limited oversight of the analytic validity of genetic tests.” That oversight only covers a small portion of the tests currently available to patients that screen for more than 900 genetic diseases. For most of the tests—which can influence such critical decisions as whether to undergo prophylactic mastectomy or terminate a pregnancy—the only vouchsafe of accuracy comes from the laboratories that perform them. The laborato-

could allow, say, the providers of operating systems such as Windows to block users’ access to material on the Internet that somebody deems inappropriate. That somebody could be the software maker itself, seeking to “protect” consumers; it could be a government regulator; or it could be a company filing suit to require the software maker to block consumers’ access to such things as online music files or to disable software already on an individual’s machine that enables that person, for example, to copy DVDs.

A third possibility is that computer users could embrace “the digital equivalent of gated communities”—closed systems that drastically restrict communication with outside computers, somewhat like the old CompuServe system.

Ironically, Zittrain sees this last scenario as the likeliest outcome if the most zealous defenders of the old Internet-as-free-for-all approach have their way and virtually no action is taken to respond to the rising threats to online security. Those who truly want to preserve the Internet’s creative life must accept some compromise, he argues. Among Zittrain’s suggestions: a new nonprofit institution that would identify and label all the pieces of code zooming around the Internet and automatically supply that information online to users every time they encountered new code on the Internet. What has to be avoided above all is the creation of “centralized gatekeepers” and the “lockdown” of personal computers. Otherwise, we face the prospect of an Internet “sadly hobbled, bearing little resemblance to the one that most of the world enjoys today.”

ries are held to overall federal standards of proficiency, but the government has created no specific standards for genetic tests.

Genetic tests fall into two broad categories, “test kits” and “home brews.” Test kits contain all the necessary elements—such as reagents, as well as instructions for conducting and interpreting the test so that a laboratory can perform a particular genetic test. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulates test kits as medical devices, but so far only four have been approved. Most genetic tests fall into the largely unregulated “home brew” category, so called because laboratories concoct their own chemical combinations and procedures. (The FDA *does* regulate the reagents used in such tests.) No pre- or postmarket assessment is done by either the FDA or the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services of the effectiveness of home brew tests.

Even if a test is accurate, there are questions about how to interpret the results. Does the presence of a particular gene, for example, really mean the individual is prone to a certain disease? What is the risk? There is “virtually no oversight” of such questions of “clinical validity.” That is a special source of concern in the case of genetic tests marketed directly to consumers, often over the Internet. Only a handful of such tests are currently available—for susceptibility to depression or osteoporosis, for example—but the number is certain to grow.

Consumers are easy prey for misleading advertisements, and they “lack the requisite knowledge to make appropriate decisions about

whether to get tested or how to interpret test results,” Javitt and Hudson argue. While some state governments have attempted to step in where the federal agencies fear to tread, “as of 2001, more than half of the states permitted [direct-to-consumer] testing for at least some types of tests.” The Federal Trade Commission has so far done nothing to curb genetic testing ads.

Javitt and Hudson believe that the FDA and other government agencies already have the means and authority to review genetic testing but lack a clear mandate to do so. New legislation that clarifies oversight authority, they conclude, is needed to ensure the “quality of all genetic tests and the safety of consumers.”

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Turning Down the Heat

THE SOURCE: “Case Closed: The Debate About Global Warming Is Over” by Gregg Easterbrook, in *Issues in Governance Studies* (June 2006).

THE GLOBAL WARMING DEBATE is gridlocked in part because the problem seems almost too big and costly to solve. That’s foolish, argues Gregg Easterbrook: “Greenhouse gases are an air pollution problem, and *all* air pollution problems of the past have cost significantly less to fix than projected, while declining faster than expected.”

Easterbrook, a visiting fellow at the Brookings Institution, detailed that history in his 1995 book *A Moment on the Earth*. He also criticized environmentalists (with whom he was sympathetic) for inducing

gloom about what could be accomplished in the future by ignoring the great gains America had already made in reducing pollution. At the time, he was somewhat skeptical of claims about human-caused global warming, but no longer. The question now is what to do about it.

Critics of the Kyoto Protocol, ratified by more than 160 countries but not the United States, are right, Easterbrook says. Even if the treaty were perfectly enforced, “atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases in 2050 would be only about one percent less than without the treaty.” (The Bush administration’s unsung multinational methane reduction pact of 2003, Easterbrook adds, “may do more to slow global warming than perfect compliance with the Kyoto treaty.”) And perfect compliance is a pipe dream: “Most nations that have ratified the Kyoto treaty are merrily ignoring it.” Canada’s greenhouse gas emissions are 24 percent above the Kyoto-mandated level, for instance.

Easterbrook’s optimism comes from U.S. experience in reducing ordinary air pollution during the past 30 years. “Today, any make or model new car purchased in the United States emits about one percent the amount of smog-forming compounds per mile as a car of 1970, and the cost of the anti-smog technology is less than \$100 per vehicle.” Remember acid rain? After Congress enacted an emissions permit trading plan in 1991, the output of harmful sulfur compounds dropped by more than a third, and “Appalachian forests are currently in their best health since Europeans

first laid eyes on them.” The reductions cost only \$200 per ton of emissions cut, not the \$2,000 originally projected.

The lesson: “Create a profit incentive for greenhouse gas reduction, and human ingenuity will rapidly be applied to the problem.” That means eschewing detailed government regulation and creating “a market-based system of auctioned or traded greenhouse gas permits.” Major emitters of gases such as carbon dioxide would be issued permits allowing them to release certain quantities of the gases. If they produced less, they would be entitled to sell leftover permits to producers who emitted more than their quota. Everybody would have a strong financial incentive to reduce emissions.

That would speed the adoption of new technologies, from the familiar wind and solar power alternatives to the less known. General Electric, for example, has developed coal-fired power plants that emit no greenhouse gases. More important, such incentives would unleash the human power of invention, with results we can’t even imagine now.

What about the developing world, with its soaring output of greenhouse gases? In a global system that gave credits for cutting emissions in places such as China, where old and antiquated technologies could be quickly updated, the gains could be huge.

The United States led the world in finding ways to tame smog and acid rain, Easterbrook declares, “and we should be first to overcome global warming.”

ARTS & LETTERS

Leading the Dance

THE SOURCE: "Dancers as Living Archives" by Martha Ullman West, in *The Chronicle Review*, April 7, 2006.

IN THE KHMER ROUGE'S DECI-
mation of Cambodia's educated
classes in the mid-1970s, 90 percent
of classical Cambodian dancers were
killed. With each death went a reposi-
tory of more than 4,500 gestures and
positions, the vocabulary of move-
ments that comprise classical Cambo-
dian dance, an offshoot of India's
Bharata Natyam. "By killing off the
dancers, the Khmer Rouge came

within an inch of killing off the
dance," writes Martha Ullman West, a
Portland, Oregon, dance writer.

Dances can be preserved
through film, video, various
notations, the visual arts, and,
sometimes, by written accounts.
But there is no more satisfactory
method of transmitting the intricac-
ies of movement than from dancer
to dancer. "Long after they leave the
stage, in their minds and muscles
they hold the memory of form,
rhythm, mood, and intent, consti-
tuting an irreplaceable resource for

performers, historians, and
frequently the choreographers
themselves," writes West. In the
case of traditional dances such as
Cambodia's, the only archive may
be the dance performers.

Modern dances are also subject to
erosion or distortion. Financial and
managerial difficulties crippled
Martha Graham's dance company
after her death in 1991. Lacking conti-
nuity in artistic direction from
dancers who personally worked with
Graham, the company's perform-
ances faltered, though a recent tour
shows evidence that it has righted
itself somewhat. "Without Graham's
dancers, works that are as much
America's national treasure as Khmer
dances are Cambodia's were nearly
relegated to some wobbly films—and



A young dancer at the School of Fine Arts in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, learns classical dance from a survivor of the Khmer Rouge cultural purges.

very few of those," writes West.

Even those dances that are recorded on film may not be adequately preserved. Avant-garde choreographer Yvonne Rainer complained of the camera's fixed position and its tendency to foreshorten when she assessed a film of her own performance of her piece *Trio A*. The film "reveals someone who can't straighten her legs, can't plié 'properly' and can't achieve the 'original' elongation and vigor in her jumps, arabesques... and shifts of weight," she wrote. Rainer's work has been notated and she has taught it to "authorized transmitters."

But some dances simply can't endure unchanged. Many of the nuances of Russian-American choreographer George Balanchine's signature 1946 ballet *The Four Temperaments* are lost, even in current performances by the company he founded, the New York City Ballet. Dance historian Nancy Reynolds has filmed various aging dancers who worked with Balanchine as they coached younger dancers on the finer points of the performance. It remains to be seen whether this project can preserve the spirit of the dance.

As for Cambodia's classical dancers, a few did survive. Many of them went to the United States and Europe, with the memory of the dance embedded in their muscles and their minds. Otherwise it would have been lost, for, as one survivor said, "the dancers were the documents."

ARTS & LETTERS

Rembrandt's Theatrical Realism

THE SOURCE: "The God of Realism" by Robert Hughes, in *The New York Review of Books* (April 6, 2006).

THE WORKS OF SOME GREAT artists inspire admiration and awe, but fail to connect at the gut level with the viewer. Not so the paintings of Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–69), observes art critic Robert Hughes. In an age dominated by grand paintings and ennobled human subjects, Rembrandt never used "the human form as a means of escape from the disorder and episodic ugliness of the real world." He imbued his subjects with enough flaws and "ordinariness" to earn a

place as "the first god of realism after Caravaggio."

Yet a misunderstanding of Rembrandt's realism has been one of the pitfalls of the effort by the Rembrandt Research Project and others to eliminate work falsely attributed to Rembrandt from his canon. One art historian discredited a putative Rembrandt called *David Playing the Harp Before Saul* (1650–55), on the grounds it was "too theatrical." Says Hughes: "Theatricality doesn't disprove Rembrandt; it is one of the things that makes him a great Baroque artist, as well as a great realist."

The task of authenticating Rembrandt's work is vastly complicated by the milieu in which he painted. Hardly a reclusive genius, Rembrandt surrounded himself with students and assistants who learned to emulate his style. Hughes lists among the

characteristics of Rembrandt's work the honest, even vulgar, details of commonplace life, the ability to depict "unvarnished, unedited pain," as in his gory *The Blinding of Samson* (1636), and a skill as "the supreme depicter of inwardness, of human thought," even in allegorical figures. Touches of humanity's imperfection, to Hughes, serve to dramatize the subject matter. In *The Return of the Prodigal Son* (c. 1668) the boy has lost a shoe

EXCERPT

Room for Improvement

Poetry writing is more humane than life. It's full of second chances. Your sentence, so to speak, can always be revised. You can fix the inappropriate, adjust every carelessness, improve what you felt. How perfect for someone like me: unabashed avoidance one afternoon, a little excess in the evening, a few corrections in the morning. The various ways I've embarrassed myself, crumpled up, in the wastebasket, never to be seen.

—STEPHEN DUNN, Pulitzer Prize-winning poet,
in *The Georgia Review* (Winter 2006)

in the rush to embrace his father; his bare foot is at once humanly vulnerable and a “none-too-subliminal image of the stripping of the spirit.”

Paintings once revered as the essence of Rembrandt, such as *The Man With the Golden Helmet* (c. 1650), are now widely regarded as the work of others. Today debate swirls around *The Polish Rider* (c. 1653), which hangs in New York’s Frick Collection. “To imagine

Rembrandt without *The Polish Rider*,” writes Hughes, “is rather like trying to imagine Wagner without *Parsifal*.”

Rembrandt left only the barest explanations of how he viewed his art. Hughes sees his conception of himself as artist embodied in the Kenwood House self-portrait of 1661–62. Rembrandt sits before a canvas on which two arcs are painted. The half-circles allude to the ancient Greek story of the

painter Apelles, who, upon visiting the studio of a fellow master painter and finding him absent, drew a perfect freehand circle on the studio wall, letting his artistic skill serve as his calling card. Rembrandt couches the allusion in a scene from his daily painterly life; he provides both a glimpse of his humanity and an “incontrovertible, utterly simple proof of mastery.” Realism becomes a conduit for the power of the sublime.

OTHER NATIONS

What Killed Angkor?

THE SOURCE: “The End of Angkor” by Richard Stone, in *Science* (March 10, 2006).

LOCATED IN MODERN-DAY Cambodia, the once-sprawling city of Angkor was the center of a powerful Khmer kingdom whose rule in Southeast Asia lasted from the ninth to 15th centuries. At its height, Angkor boasted a population of several hundred thousand, an extensive system of reservoirs and waterways, and many elaborate Hindu temples such as the immense, gilded Angkor Wat. Thai armies encroached on the area in the mid-15th century, and by the 16th century the city lay abandoned for reasons unclear, *Science’s* Asia news editor, Richard Stone, writes. Among the theories offered for Angkor’s demise are the shift of trade southward toward the sea and the ascension of Theravada

Buddhism in the area.

Thirty years ago French researchers proposed an alternate catalyst, a sharp decline in crop yields possibly caused by the silting of irrigation channels sped by deforestation. Then the rule of the Khmer Rouge from 1975–79 and subsequent chaos halted archaeological efforts in Angkor for nearly 20 years. Recent discoveries made by the Australian-led Greater Angkor Project reveal that a combination of bad engineering and geological uplift of the area’s riverbeds centuries ago may have hindered the functioning of Angkor’s engineered water system and left the city vulnerable to food shortages.

The team used satellite imagery and ground surveys to reveal a city that was far larger than previously thought. The canals, water tanks,

and three large reservoirs formed the basis of a water management system that completely altered the natural landscape. Around the canal system grew a “vast low-density patchwork of homes, temples, and rice paddies” scattered over a thousand square kilometers.

One mystery of Angkor’s watercourses is a spillway branching off from one of the canals that seems to have been purposely destroyed. Archaeologist Roland Fletcher hypothesizes that Angkor engineers tried in vain to remedy a flow problem, then tore apart the spillway to prevent it from causing further disruptions. According to Fletcher, Angkor’s water infrastructure “became so inflexible, convoluted, and huge that it could neither be replaced nor avoided, and had become both too elaborate and too piecemeal.” As a result, it became less able to accommodate events such as drought or flood. Future research into the changing climate conditions of the area will reveal whether erratic monsoons between 1300 and 1600, leading to drier

weather, exacerbated Angkor's water troubles.

The destructive combination of changing environmental conditions and poor infrastructure is not peculiar to Angkor. Archaeologists also attribute the downfall of the Mayan Empire, by AD 900, to a series of droughts coupled with overpopulation. "Angkor's downfall," says Stone, "may be a cautionary tale for modern societies on the knife edge of sustainability."

OTHER NATIONS

Fidel's African Adventures

THE SOURCE: "Moscow's Proxy? Cuba and Africa 1975-1988" by Piero Gleijeses, in *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Spring 2006.

AMERICANS WATCHED IN alarm during the 1970s as Fidel Castro upped the ante on a forgotten front of the Cold War by sending thousands of Cuban troops and aid workers to Africa. The arrival of 36,000 Cuban troops in Angola beginning in November 1975 was followed in late 1977 by deployment of another 16,000 troops to war-torn Ethiopia. Many observers were persuaded that Cuba was simply doing the Soviet Union's bidding.

Using U.S. and Soviet archives and unreleased Cuban documents to which he has access, Piero Gleijeses, a professor of American foreign policy at Johns Hopkins' School of Advanced International Studies, concludes that Cuba was not playing the Kremlin's pawn, at least in Angola. A 1978 U.S. interagency study concluded that Cuba was not involved in Africa "solely

or even primarily" because of the Soviets but was motivated by "its activist revolutionary ethos and its determination to expand its own political influence in the Third World at the expense of the West."

Following the 1974 collapse of Portuguese rule in Angola, Agostinho Neto's left-wing Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) emerged as the likely successors, prompting covert U.S. opposition and, eventually, an invasion by South African troops. Neto appealed to Cuba for help and Castro agreed, writes Gleijeses, because defeat for the MPLA would mean "the victory of apartheid and the reinforcement of white domination of the black majority in southern Africa." Cuban aid and technical workers also poured into Angola, reaching a peak of 5,000 and staying through the mid-1980s. Cuba eventually sent aid and technical workers to 11 other African countries and military missions to five others, including Mozambique and Benin.

The Soviet Union eventually accepted Cuba's Angola intervention, but the two countries "repeatedly clashed" over strategy there and throughout southern Africa. But the Soviet leadership commended Castro for his foray into the Horn of Africa in 1977, when he sent 16,000 troops to support Mengistu Haile Mariam's Ethiopian junta against a Somali attack. That support allowed Mengistu to unleash a "war of terror" against Eritrean rebels in the north.

Castro was willing to shoulder substantial costs in pursuit of his goals, including a possible breach in relations with the Soviet Union, whose leader, Leonid Brezhnev, "opposed the dispatch of Cuban

Castro was willing to shoulder substantial costs, including Soviet disapproval, in pursuit of his goals.

troops to Angola," says Gleijeses. And Castro's adventures ended President Jimmy Carter's talk of normalizing relations with Havana. The Cubans lost more than 2,000 troops in Africa, not to mention the services of the tens of thousands of Cuban soldiers and aid workers whose labor could have helped Cuba's ailing economy. The Soviet Union supplied Cuba's weapons, and Soviet economic aid increased over the years, but "clear evidence" of a link between the aid and Cuba's actions "may lie in sealed boxes in the Cuban and Soviet archives." The linkage, says Gleijeses, "should not be exaggerated," though Cuba could not have done what it did without Soviet support.

What did Cuba achieve? By coming to Ethiopia's defense, Castro upheld the principle of inviolable borders but also propped up a brutal regime. "Call it bias," writes Gleijeses, "but although I cannot condemn the Cuban role, I cannot applaud it either." In Angola, the MPLA regime became repressive and corrupt, but the alternatives were still worse. Above all, Gleijeses argues, Cuba saved Angola from white South Africa's intervention, ended the myth of South African invincibility, and ensured by its presence that Pretoria would later accept the independence of Namibia, furthering the historic transition that would lead to the end of the apartheid regime in South Africa.

OTHER NATIONS

Tenuous Turkey

THE SOURCE: “Turkey on the Brink” by Philip Gordon and Omer Taspinar, in *The Washington Quarterly*, Summer 2006.

TURKEY IS OFTEN HELD UP BY THE United States as an example of the kind of democratic, secular, and Muslim nation it hopes to bring about in Iraq and elsewhere throughout the Middle East. Yet there are increasing signs that Turkey, a longtime strategic partner in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) once seemingly assured membership in the European Union, is becoming disgruntled with Europe and the United States. Although the country has officially begun the process to join the EU, France recently altered its constitution to require a referendum vote on future EU “enlargements,” and officials in both Germany and the Netherlands have expressed hesitation about admitting what would instantly become the Union’s second-largest nation in terms of population.

In the past, say Philip Gordon and Omer Taspinar—senior fellow and research fellow, respectively, at the Brookings Institution—Turkey relied on its strong ties to the United States whenever European relations soured. The American-led invasion of Iraq, however, has undercut that option. The Turks fear that the chaos in Iraq will lead to “the creation of a de facto . . . independent Kurdistan” in northern Iraq, reigniting separatist sentiments among Turkey’s 15 million Kurds. Those fears are bolstered by “the revival of violence and terrorist attacks by the separatist Kurdish Workers’ Party (PKK) now partly

based in northern Iraq.” Incidents such as one in July 2003, when U.S. forces in northern Iraq arrested a dozen Turkish special forces troops and detained them, hooded, for 24 hours, have only heightened tensions.

Turkey’s ties with the West once seemed unbreakable. The secularist reforms of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881–1938) following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire—abolishing many Islamic institutions, emancipating women, and changing the dress code—set the country on course for eventually joining Europe. It joined NATO during the Cold War. But military coups in 1960, 1971, and 1980 damaged its standing in European eyes, and its bloody campaign against the PKK in the 1990s was a black mark. “Enlargement fatigue” brought on by the addition of 10 new central and eastern European members in 2004, as well as the recent upsurge of anti-Muslim sentiment, further dimmed Europe’s never-high enthusiasm. Today, say Gordon and Taspinar,

“only 14 percent of Turks actually think that Turkey will ever be admitted to the EU.” Other stumbling blocks to Western rapprochement with Turkey include a long-simmering dispute concerning Turks living on the Greek-dominated island of Cyprus (an EU member).

We could soon be asking “Who lost Turkey?,” warn the authors. They raise several troubling scenarios, including unilateral Turkish action to block the emergence of an independent Kurdistan in Iraq, resulting in “confrontation with the United States and . . . probably ending Turkey’s hope of joining the EU.” Or Turkey might “opt for closer strategic relations with countries such as Russia, Iran, China, and India.” One hopeful sign is that political power now resides with the AKP, a moderately Islamic party that has vigorously pursued reforms in order to win EU membership. Helping Turkey achieve that dream, the authors assert, would go a long way toward preserving an alliance that the West can ill afford to lose.



Kurdish separatists gather in April in the southeastern Turkish city of Sanliurfa to mark the birthday of jailed PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan, at one of a series of demonstrations that left 16 dead.

Also in this issue:

Florence King on not-so-good cheer

Albert Innaurato on the man behind the Met

Nick Gillespie on magazine editor Willie Morris

Lawrence Rosen on Morocco

∫. Peter Pham on America's muddled mission in Africa

Max Holland on presidential commissions

David Lindley on the hinterlands of algebra

Amy E. Schwartz on faith and evolution

CURRENT BOOKS

REVIEWS OF NEW AND NOTEWORTHY NONFICTION

A Battle Glorious and Needless

Reviewed by Max Byrd

WINSTON GROOM HAS THAT MOST enviable gift in a writer, an instantly likable voice. He is unpretentious and intelligent, easygoing, casual, even Deep South folksy. When he explains that New Orleans is a town you leave either crying or drunk, or remarks that if the British had known more about Andrew Jackson they “might have worried some,” you can almost hear the ice cubes tinkle against the julep glass. But readers of his nonfiction, works such as *A Storm in Flanders* (2002), as well as his novels—among others, *Forrest Gump* (1986)—know that he also possesses a remarkable historical imagination, sensitive at once to patterns and to personalities, and fully capable of bringing a neglected or half-forgotten moment bursting noisily back to life. That’s exactly what he has done in this splendid resurrection of the Battle of New Orleans.

The War of 1812—“President Madison’s War”—resulted from repeated British seizures of American merchant ships and sailors, British agitation of western Indian tribes against American settlers, and the unslaked ambition of congressional leaders such as Henry Clay to invade and annex the vast, snowy territory to the north. (You could

identify the “war hawk,” drawled John Randolph of Virginia, by its monotonous cry, “Canada, Canada, Canada!”)

Groom begins with a sketch of the new American nation in the early 19th century—eight million strong, an “unwieldy economic giant”—and a brief account of the war’s largely disastrous progress for the American side. Madison’s War was no mere skirmish. By late 1814, the British had marched through Washington and burned the White House and the Capitol. In New England, where, because of the massive disruption of trade, the war was exceedingly unpopular, the Hartford Convention was furiously debating secession from the Union. And though British and American delegates had sat down together in Ghent, Belgium, to negotiate a peace, out on the open sea an armada of troop-laden British ships was steadily making its way toward what Groom calls “America’s crown jewel of the West,” the city of New Orleans.

He makes very clear what was at stake: Once New Orleans was conquered, it seemed likely that the British would demand a huge

PATRIOTIC FIRE:
Andrew Jackson and Jean Laffite at the Battle of New Orleans.

By Winston Groom.
Knopf. 292 pages. \$26



Brilliant leadership at the Battle of New Orleans propelled General Andrew Jackson all the way to the White House.

stretch of American territory as a condition for peace, and quite possibly “declare the Louisiana Purchase void and plant the Union Jack in that priceless territory, comprising all of the American land west of the Mississippi—an area larger than the United States itself prior to the purchase.” The fall of New Orleans, Henry Adams later observed, would have been “the signal for a general demand that Madison should resign.”

From this wide-scale backdrop, Groom rapidly narrows his focus to the two larger-than-life figures of his title: General Andrew Jackson of Tennessee and the genial pirate king of the Gulf of Mexico’s Baratavia Bay, Jean Laffite. These are Homeric characters. The 47-year-old Jackson, a man of enormous and vivifying hatreds, can serve as anybody’s Achilles. He is to all appearances little more than an amateur, untutored in military science or much else, but full of wrath against the English, who had imprisoned and orphaned him in the Revolutionary War. There are few images more stirring in American history than the ailing but indomitable Jackson, cigar clenched between his teeth,

striding up and down the improvised mud ramps parts his ragtag “Dirty Shirt” soldiers had built in the plantation fields south of New Orleans in hopes of repelling the British army. The novelist Groom does as well as anyone at capturing the swirling contradictions and energies of Jackson’s nature: one moment, charming the governor’s wife in a polished drawing room, and the next, hammering his fist on a table and thundering, “By the eternal, they shall not sleep on our soil!”

Against Jackson’s broad and unmistakable passions, history, the Muse of Opposites, placed the Creole Odysseus, Laffite. Groom is especially good on this mysterious and romantic figure, who was probably born at Port-au-Prince in what is now Haiti and who followed a winding path as privateer, gambler, and smuggler to the marshy island world of the Mississippi delta, close by New Orleans. In his early thirties at the time, he was younger than Jackson, subtle and given to disguises, handsome, “‘well made,’ in the parlance of the day—with a physical comportment something like that of a large, powerful cat.” Although the British offered money and rank if he would aid in their attack, Laffite spurned them and instead put himself, his men, and his extensive arsenal of weapons and gunpowder at the Americans’ disposal. Jackson, who had a prudish streak, at first demurred (the pirates were “hellish banditi”), but soon changed his mind.

Stage set, actors in place, Groom proceeds to the core of his book, a long, thrilling, almost day-by-day narrative of the battle. Little here is original, but everything is extremely well done. He begins by looking over the shoulder of the British fleet as it sails across the Gulf of Mexico in mid-December 1814, more than 60 vessels, eventually about 14,000 men. So massive a war machine will find it cumbersome to land and work its way north through the endless green spider’s web of bayous, creeks, and canals that lies between the Louisiana coast and New Orleans itself. But the British, driven by visions of plunder (their password was said to be “beauty and booty”), make a foothold at a desolate, mosquito- and alligator-

infested bog called Lake Borgne. And from there, they slowly advance to the Villeré Plantation, about eight miles below the city, directly in front of Jackson's line of defense—while Jackson struggles to arm and deploy his troops.

Writing about battle requires high literary skill—there must be clarity, energy, constant vivid physical action. Groom has a wonderful eye for detail. Here is Laffite's odd cutthroat brother Dominique You beside his cannon: "squat, smiling his perpetual grin, his neck thick as a tortoise, and smoking a cigar." Groom understands when to pause for readers to catch their breath, or to build suspense. He makes full use of primary sources, particularly the numerous British diaries that have survived. He has a moving empathy for the soldiers on the eve of combat: "As to the emotions a man feels on confronting an enemy, one whom he will actually *see* at any moment, there is no known expression in the English language; his mind can only work through an abstract collage of uncertain thoughts. This morning the men stood or squatted, honing knives, cleaning weapons, . . . or dreaming restlessly of violence."

The climactic moment arrives on Sunday morning, January 8, 1815. While the church bells are still ringing in New Orleans, some 5,300 sea-

soned British veterans march forward in columns, ramrod straight, drums beating, against some 4,500 entrenched Americans: militia, volunteers, Choctaws, men of color, Tennessee and Kentucky sharpshooters. When Winston Groom's brilliant account is over, 2,036 British soldiers have been killed or wounded, and three British generals lie dead on the field. Jackson's casualties are an astonishing eight killed, 13 wounded.

It was a battle, historians always note, that need never have been fought—on Christmas Eve, some 5,000 miles away, the British and American commissioners had already signed the Treaty of Ghent, ending the War of 1812. But no one in North America would know that for another six weeks. Meanwhile, the Battle of New Orleans had already begun to take its place, in Groom's words, as "a defining event of the American 19th century." It put an end forever to British territorial designs in the United States. It solidified, for a time, the faltering Union. And it launched Andrew Jackson and his un-Jeffersonian brand of populist democracy straight toward the White House, which would soon enough be rebuilt from its ashes and receive him as the seventh president.

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Benumbed by Joy

Reviewed by Florence King

THERE'S NOTHING LIKE AN AUTHORITATIVE, well-documented Grand Guignol horror story. If you've ever wondered about the source of those big, ecstatic American smiles or the frantically cheery commands to "have a nice day" that have become an inescapable part of our national life, read this riveting book and wonder no more. Chances are that the perpetrators of the friendly fire are zonked out on antidepressants, floating on magnetic clouds of alternative medicine, or overexercised into a state of eupho-

ria. All three instrumentalities have a common goal of "artificial happiness"—happiness as an end in itself, an induced emotion with no connection to the facts of one's life.

An M.D. who is still a practicing anesthesiologist, Ronald W. Dworkin is also a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute with a Ph.D. in political philosophy—that rarity, the doctor-as-intellectual who's

ARTIFICIAL HAPPINESS:

The Dark Side of the New Happy Class.

By Ronald W. Dworkin.
Carroll & Graf.
343 pp. \$24.95

educated in the humanities and well read in something other than his narrow specialty. He traces the beginnings of artificial happiness to the 1950s. Reacting against the alienating conformity described in David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd* (1950) and William H. Whyte's *The Organization Man* (1956), popular clergy of the day published cheery self-help books. For the comfortable Protestant middle class there was Norman Vincent Peale's *The Power of Positive Thinking* (1952), which counseled, "Practice happy thinking every day. . . . Develop the happiness habit, and life will become a continual feast." For Catholics there was Bishop Fulton J. Sheen's *Way to Happiness* (1953), and for Southern Protestants there was Billy Graham's *The Secret of Happiness* (1955).

Not surprisingly, the tranquilizer Miltown

became popular around this time, followed by Valium and Librium in the 1960s, when the Age of Aquarius hit and Timothy Leary upped the happiness ante in *The Politics of Ecstasy* (1968). In 1994 Eliza-

beth Wurtzel published *Prozac Nation*, a memoir of her 10-year depression. The book and Prozac both took off. Over the next 10 years, prescriptions for antidepressants tripled, as doctors began treating depression the way the managed care insurance system wanted them to: fast. With 13 minutes allotted for each office visit, a prescription for Prozac, Zoloft, or Paxil kept the assembly line moving.

Dworkin presents a gallery of legal druggies who are so content with their artificial happiness that they have lost all incentive to take action against what made them unhappy in the first place. A man who stays married to a mentally unstable virago, lest a divorce enable her to clean him out financially and gain custody of their son, tells Dworkin, "My wife is

still a bitch. I can't stand her. But now I don't care so much. I still feel good no matter what happens." Dworkin believes that society is the victim when millions choose this stupefied state of least resistance, because it eventually destroys conscience and character on a national scale. As others have noted, we need only imagine Abe Lincoln, a clinical depressive, on Prozac: "Well, the Union is finished, we're two countries now, and slavery is a fact of life, but hey, I feel good about myself."

Except for certain chiropractic techniques, Dworkin takes an equally dim view of alternative medicine. Meditation, yoga, acupuncture, magnets, herbs, and aromatherapy are all variations on the placebo principle. They bring patients to "a state of weakened rational activity, filling the emptiness in their lives with romantic notions and grabbing hold of them with useless substances."

He's at his most mordant on the fitness craze, which got its start in 1975 when a scientist studying runners' euphoric "second wind" discovered naturally occurring stimulants in the human brain that attach themselves to receptors in the same way that morphine attaches to opiate receptors. Scientists first called these stimulants "endorphins," "endo" for endogenous and "orphine" for morphine. An *e* was later dropped and a buzzword was born. Given a medical imprimatur, joggers never miss a chance to announce, "Gotta get those endorphins going."

Mild exercise isn't enough to produce artificial happiness. It has to be obsessive, "a testament of piety and rectitude; going to the gym regularly became medicine's Sunday school version of life." The happiness of fitness freaks is more like convert's zeal. It is also the happiness of schadenfreude, "expressed most commonly in contempt for fat people and an elevation of trim people to sainthood." The culture of exercise "is not about health; it is about pride."

Dworkin admits that he has had scant success in alerting political activists to the dangers of artificial happiness. His remarks were received with polite indifference by a gathering of

Meditation, yoga, acupuncture, magnets, herbs, and aromatherapy are all variations on the placebo principle.

religious conservatives fixated on beginning-of-life and end-of-life issues, yet, as he shows, our belief that happiness is the measure of life has a direct bearing on both abortion and euthanasia. The first-trimester fetus lacks the rudimentary nervous system to experience self-awareness. Without self-awareness there can be no happiness, and thus, in the happiness-is-all worldview, no need for life. By the same token, unhappiness inevitably increases in old age. We are moving, Dworkin predicts, toward accepting physician-assisted suicide as a preemptive strike against the miseries of decrepitude.

The book bogs down only once, when Dworkin, straining to find a cure for our happiness addiction, advises patients to read philosophy and doctors to take courses in the humani-

ties, so that they can relate to each other on a deeper level. This would never work in America, because we know that introspective people tend to be unhappy. But at least Dworkin himself has read widely, and it shows on every page. His best observation is reminiscent of a poem by Wallace Stevens or the baleful imprecations of ancient Greek drama: "And there is something unpleasant about their happiness, something lacking in warmth. There is nothing sunny in the sun; it's more like a hot moon. Their happiness radiates unwholesomeness because it emanates from an unnatural source, not from real life."

■ Florence King is the author of 10 books, including *Confessions of a Failed Southern Lady* (1985), *With Charity Toward None: A Fond Look at Misanthropy* (1992), *The Florence King Reader* (1995), and, most recently, *STET, Dammit!*, a collection of her *National Review* columns from 1991 to 2002.

Final Bow

Reviewed by Albert Innaurato

FOR 123 YEARS, NEW YORK'S METROPOLITAN Opera has been one of the greatest purveyors of the art form in the world. Its stage has been graced by such legendary figures as Enrico Caruso and Rosa Ponselle. In the 1930s, it proved that Richard Wagner's music dramas could sell out the house, and such Wagner specialists as Kirsten Flagstad and Lauritz Melchior virtually took up residence. For many years, well into the 1940s, the Metropolitan produced new and very interesting operas on a vast scale (the old Met on Broadway was immense, as is the new Met, now 40 years old, at Lincoln Center) while also helping to keep familiar works alive. The podium has been home to Gustav Mahler, Arturo Toscanini, and, more recently, James Levine, who has transformed an uneven orchestra into a world-class ensemble. The Met has produced opera seven times a week every season since the early 1950s, often with the most famous singers in the world. Only a few European houses can match that schedule, and they have fewer seats and far more government funding.

Joseph Volpe has been the Met's general manager for 16 years, the first to rise to the top from the working ranks of the house. Now, having announced plans to retire later this year, he has written his memoir.

Those familiar with Volpe's scheming ways will note a queer passage late in the book. He speaks glowingly of a Swedish soprano named Erika Sunnegårdh, even likening her to the legendary Rosa Ponselle, though it appears that he has never heard Sunnegårdh in a complete performance. When writing this, Volpe was aware that the all-but-unknown Sunnegårdh was scheduled to make her Met debut on April 13, 2006. But he couldn't possibly have known that she would substitute for the beloved Karita Mattila in a broadcast performance of Beethoven's *Fidelio* on April 1, and would stand in for Mattila on another occasion before the scheduled debut. The broadcast got enormous hype, includ-

THE TOUGHEST SHOW ON EARTH:
My Rise and Reign at the Metropolitan Opera.

By Joseph Volpe, with Charles Michener.
Knopf. 304 pp. \$25.95

ing a huge article in *The New York Times*, which has been rather chary with its Met coverage in the past decade. Such an article takes time to set up and place. “If Erika Sunnegårdh makes anything like the splash Ponselle did, it will be front-page news,” Volpe writes—cooly?—in his memoir. When the article appeared, several divas e-mailed me to wonder what the “indisposed” Mattila had been paid or promised to stand down. It’s just like Volpe, many thought, to try to rig something thrilling to give his book a grand sendoff.

In the event, it was a damp, if not wet, squib. On the radio broadcast, poor Sunnegårdh got lost in her big act 1 aria. In the house, her voice seemed relatively small and undeveloped save for the very top, a surprising problem for a woman of 40. But, in keeping with the Met’s current artistic dictates, she *is* pretty, and able on stage.

Maybe it’s just a coincidence, and Volpe didn’t manipulate Sunnegårdh’s timing or publicity. But that doesn’t let him off the hook for straining credulity in his book. He writes, for instance, that he once scoured the Met archives for something to read and emerged with the memoir of the incomparable Giulio Gatti-Casazza, the Met’s longest-ruling general manager, who served from 1908 to 1935. (Since 1908, the Met has had only four general managers.) Now, Volpe is too well known as defiantly anti-intellectual—a cover, perhaps, for insecurity about his ignorance of opera—for this to wash. One can imagine him down in the archives only to bury dead bodies. Like a lot of this book, the incident reads as though it were cooked up by Volpe’s scrivener, Charles Michener, an editor at *The New Yorker*.

One assumes that Volpe’s memoir was pitched to publishers as a Dickensian tale. Born in Brooklyn in 1940, the Pip-like spawn of Italian immigrants, our Joe rises through hard work, luck with mentors, and a big heart to joust with and best the billionaire snobs on the Met’s board. There’s something a little fishy about this, too. Unlike

many children of immigrants in his generation, Volpe mostly grew up in suburban comfort on Long Island, not in an Italian-speaking inner-city ghetto. Though his was not an opera-loving family, his maternal grandmother sometimes played 78s of the intermezzo from Pietro Mascagni’s *Cavalleria Rusticana*. He had middle-class and even upper-middle-class opportunities (his uncle was an important Washington lawyer). He just didn’t take them. Rather, he devoted his high school years to flashy dressing and doo-wop (so he says), and lasted only a week at St. John’s University in Queens.

Volpe fell in love with cars, which, he claims, later enabled him to relate to the hallowed conductor Herbert von Karajan. (Karajan hated artistic and intellectual types—they were too hard to dupe.) Volpe’s father got him a bank loan, an uncle helped him form a corporation, and, at 17, he opened an Amoco gas station on Long Island. He promptly started a price war, but still managed to get elected the most successful young businessman in Nassau County when he was 20. He also made the first of three marriages (he has seven children).

A year later, in 1961, leaking gas in the repair shop ignited, and Volpe was burned out of his service station. So he fled to that pit of evil, the theater district, dominated in those years by the old Met (the Met moved into the new Lincoln Center in 1966). Not a union member, Volpe took every job he could get in that union-controlled environment. Late at night, he changed the marquees on the Astor, the Victoria, and the Paramount—long hours and dangerous work at the time—and then crawled back to a cheap, cockroach-filled flop house, rarely sleeping at his Long Island home with his wife and kids. His earnings took a major hit. Why did he do it? One assumes that this rather sheltered young man was on the lookout for adventure, but Volpe, rarely introspective, never explains.

Soon, one of his mentors got him to take the union test, even though he told Joe, “You



Joseph Volpe (left) shares a Met moment with tenor Plácido Domingo.

don't know how to keep your mouth shut." When Volpe easily passed, the mentor said, "You want to build the best and biggest sets in the world? . . . You do that at the Metropolitan Opera." So Volpe went to the Met and got hired as an apprentice carpenter. He mentions passing the bust of Enrico Caruso, outside the office of the then-general manager (the famously elegant and icy Rudolf Bing). "I nodded at the great tenor, and he nodded back" may be the cheesiest line in the book, but it has plenty of competition.

Volpe's first assignment was to go out for coffee for the other carpenters. His first decision was to refuse. "Every apprentice gets coffee," he was told. "I don't," he said. More such standoffs with superiors followed. Even so, Volpe rose to master carpenter in 1966, technical director in 1978, assistant manager in 1981, and the top job in 1990.

No doubt there's an interesting story in his ascent: How he courted and abandoned mentors. (He ruefully admits that claims of betrayal by John Dexter, the late director of

production, might contain a nugget of truth.) How he slipped past the wasps' nest surrounding the outwardly genial conductor James Levine, one of the more powerful musical presences in the Met's history. How he positioned himself to control those areas of operations outside Levine's interest. Volpe is an operator of near genius, and his patience was admirable. When, in his own mind, it was finally his turn to take charge, the board considered some 400 people, none of them named Volpe. The board selected a courtly man with a British accent, who proved hopeless. Seven months later, in 1990, Volpe was in—but as "general director," not "general manager." For that title, he had to wait until 1993.

Volpe provides few fresh details here that reveal the real inner workings of the Met. He rehashes, for an entire chapter, his controversial firing of soprano Kathleen Battle, but fails to note that the poor woman had been a problem for years and that he

waited until she stopped selling out the house to rid himself of her. He calls Luciano Pavarotti and Placido Domingo his “Siamese twins,” an appellation neither would appreciate. Of course, he doesn’t speak of Pavarotti’s inability to read music, which cost the Met his presence on stage and a fully funded recording of Verdi’s *La Forza del Destino* in the late 1990s, or of Domingo’s altering of sections of most of the scores he has performed in the house since 1995 to be sung in a lower key. Volpe does, however, boast repeatedly about his friendship with Rudy Giuliani. To Volpe, music doesn’t seem to matter as much as power.

In answer to the often-raised criticism that the Met does too few new works, Volpe remarks that not even the esteemed Met archivist Robert

Although there were crises during Volpe’s Met tenure, this slim volume leaves one with the odd sense that he didn’t really matter.

Tuggle could name the composers of several new operas presented there in the past: *The Man Without a Country*, *The Island God*, and *The Warrior*. But Tuggle would surely

know the names Walter Damrosch, Gian Carlo Menotti, and Bernard Rogers. More important, in the very teeth of the Depression, the Met produced Deems Taylor’s *Peter Ibbetson*, Howard Hanson’s *Merry Mount*, and Louis Gruenberg’s *The Emperor Jones*.

By contrast, from roughly 1985 to 1995, Volpe—with the support of the ad man Bruce Crawford, his champion on the all-important, notably conservative board of directors, and a staggeringly rich patron from Kansas named Sybil Harrington—presented the eye-numbing, soul-killing, *derrière-garde*, stupidly grand productions of the played-out director Franco Zeffirelli. Never has there been a less human *La Bohème*, a more bloated and preposterous *Tosca*, a more garish *Turandot*, or a more zoo-like *Carmen*, with greater attention paid the donkeys than the cigarette girl. Though Volpe’s Met did stage the occasional new opera (not always by the best or most stage-savvy

composers), masterworks by Michael Tippett, Hans Werner Henze, Gyorgy Ligeti, and Olivier Messiaen were ignored, and no stream was developed to encourage new American works. (Peter Gelb, Volpe’s successor, has promised to change that.) A steady developmental process is important for attracting opera-shy composers to the form, because it lets them find and fix problems before opening night.

For those with an interest in the maze of the Met, Johanna Fiedler’s *Molto Agitato: The Mayhem Behind the Music at the Metropolitan Opera* (2001) is probably the best insider guide, though it’s still very guarded. To get a sense of one of Volpe’s more eccentric mentors, try John Dexter’s *The Honourable Beast: A Posthumous Autobiography* (1993). For a sense of Volpe himself, though, you’ll have to look elsewhere than his memoir. When I interviewed him for *Forbes* in 1999, he talked about his difficult relationship with his father, as though a need to prove something to a doubting parent fueled his ambition and energy. But this paternal conflict gets drained of all import here.

Although there were crises during his tenure, this slim volume leaves one with the odd sense that Volpe didn’t really matter. The “hot” Met that took off in the late 1980s didn’t last past the mid-1990s. Attendance has fallen badly, and many of the once-new productions now seem humorously old-fashioned. Volpe didn’t attract a younger, nontourist audience, or find powerful new works. What’s the value of an institution that costs so much to attend and delivers so little? A frank and detailed account of Volpe’s career and, more broadly, the “corporatization” of American not-for-profit art institutions might be enlightening, shocking, and sad. But this collection of trivial anecdotes and stale headlines is of no use.

■ ALBERT INNAURATO is a playwright who has written about music and culture for *Opera News*, *The New York Times*, *Forbes*, and other publications.

IN BRIEF

ARTS & LETTERS

Critic and Creep

THIS IS THE SECOND BIOGRAPHY of Clement Greenberg, kingmaker to that group of artists now known as Abstract Expressionists, to appear since his death in 1994. And Alice Goldfarb Marquis, like the earlier biographer, Florence Rubinfeld, can't help noticing that Greenberg was a terrible, terrible man. He socked people at cocktail parties, neglected his wives and children, whinged through an abbreviated tour of military duty, tormented his comfortably middle-class parents, scorned low-class "Jews that wear jewelry," bullied and manipulated his friends. He was a selfish, lying, cheating, arrogant, lazy, misogynistic SOB. In his 1998 *New Yorker* review of the Rubinfeld biography, art critic Adam Gopnik seized upon the moment when character became destiny: During a visit to the countryside, five-year-old Clement pursued an unsuspecting tame goose and clubbed it to death with a shovel. "Anyone familiar with the varieties of popular biography," wrote Gopnik, "can sense the future as it approaches: the slow escalation in targets, the growing taste for blood, the rise to bigger and uglier assaults, the sordid end. The die is cast; the boy will become an art critic."

Of course: Art criticism isn't for mensches. Yet as Marquis wends her way toward Greenberg's "sordid end," a reader may begin to feel, if not admiration, at least a measure of interest. Greenberg treated himself with the same cruelty he meted out to others—drank with a vengeance, chain-smoked, drugged himself to sleep every night, alternately promoted and subverted his career all the way to his grave. If not exactly loyal, he proved perversely stubborn: Having anointed

ART CZAR:

The Rise and Fall of Clement Greenberg.

By Alice Goldfarb Marquis. MFA Publications. 321 pp. \$35

Jackson Pollock and Kenneth Noland as the only true heirs to Impressionism, he stuck to his bet in an age of critical opportunism. He revised his work obsessively, read serious books, and, deeply and continually, relished ideas. In a harrowing kind of way, he was fun.

Greenberg was born in 1909 in New York City. Literature was his first love. He majored in English at Syracuse University, then mostly lollygagged around his parents' house in Brooklyn, reading and sleeping, until his aggrieved father sent him out west to supervise the family necktie business. Greenberg's sojourn lasted only long enough for him to marry, knock up, and abandon his first wife, after which he fled back to New York, to hole up with "that herd of independent minds," as Lionel Trilling called the intellectuals of his day, in Greenwich Village. Surrounded by his betters in the field he loved most, literary criticism, Greenberg found the visual arts wide open for interpretation. Writing about art for *The Nation* and *Partisan Review* in the 1940s and '50s, Greenberg filled a critical void. His take-no-prisoners tone easily upstaged the gee-whiz art appreciation of *Life* and *Time*.

Greenberg's relationships with Pollock, Noland, Helen Frankenthaler (his love interest for several years), David Smith, Morris Louis, and other Modernists weren't so much appreciative as dictatorial. Clem separated the "good" paintings from the "bad" ones, steered the artist in a given direction, then mounted a critical offensive, telling the viewing public what it needed to know. Along the way he inspired Tom Wolfe's facetious guide to abstract art, *The Painted Word* (1975).



Art critic Clement Greenberg in 1948

As a student at Bennington College, I witnessed the critic's power one afternoon in 1975. Greenberg was visiting Ken Noland in nearby Shaftsbury, Vermont (dating one of Noland's friends gave me guest credentials). The entourages of painter and critic waited in suspenseful silence as Greenberg entered Noland's studio and began examining the target paintings. "What if you turned these around?" Greenberg finally demanded, meaning, what if the squares were turned into diamonds? A studio assistant hopped to; Greenberg nodded. A few months later, a show of diamond-shaped Noland's appeared on 57th Street.

Marquis, author of *The Art Biz: The Covert World of Collectors, Dealers, Auction Houses, Museums, and Critics* (1991) and *Marcel Duchamp: The Bachelor Stripped Bare* (2002), writes engagingly, making a reasonable case for Greenberg's enduring importance, a dozen years after his death. He didn't "rise and fall" so much as rise and fade away, obscured and eventually buried under Pop Art (which he despised), Keith Haring and Julian Schnabel, the vile careerism of the 1980s, and whatever's come next. Now that we've begun to look back on the 1950s and '60s as a time of high seriousness—it's all relative—Greenberg's star will likely rise again.

—Ann Loftin

Tell Them Willie Boy Was Here

FEW MAGAZINE EDITORS cast a longer shadow than Willie Morris (1934–99), who took over the top slot at *Harper's* in 1967. The 32-year-old Morris rapidly turned America's second-oldest continuously published magazine (the oldest is *Scientific American*) from a stuffy old men's club into a cutting-edge cabaret that, along with *Esquire* and *New York*,

showcased that path-breaking mix of fictional techniques and shoe-leather reporting known as the New Journalism.

He hired David Halberstam, who wrote long articles that formed the core of *The Best and the Brightest* (1972), about the hubristic architects of America's Vietnam policy, and *The Powers That Be* (1979), about the intersection of mass media and politics. Morris rejuvenated Norman Mailer's flagging career by turning over virtually entire issues of the magazine to the novelist's first-person reportage on war protests outside the Pentagon, the 1968 Republican and Democratic national conventions, and the feminist movement, which became the books *The Armies of the Night* (1968), *Miami and the Siege of Chicago* (1968), and *The Prisoner of Sex* (1971). Morris was in steady demand on TV and op-ed pages, and he was a fixture at Elaine's, the Manhattan restaurant that's a den of power brokers and literati. How hot was he? "There were eight million telephone numbers in the Manhattan directory, and every one of them would have returned my calls," he boasted in his memoir *New York Days* (1993), exaggerating only a bit.

Yet in 1971 Morris resigned from *Harper's* after battling its then-owners, the Minnesota-based Cowles family, over the magazine's spiraling costs and, more important, its left-leaning politics. Though only in his mid-thirties, Morris never regained his luster. Bitter and despondent, he decamped from Manhattan to the Hamptons for a decade and then to his beloved home state of Mississippi, where he became Ole Miss's first writer-in-residence. Over the years he published a string of novels, reminiscences, and nonfiction works, none of which achieved the literary acclaim of his precocious memoir *North Toward Home* (1967). Though his children's books proved popular, especially *My Dog Skip* (1995), the basis of a successful 2000 film, his post-*Harper's* years and output are rightly seen as a coda to what he called his brief attempt "to remake literary America."

IN SEARCH OF WILLIE MORRIS:

The Mercurial Life of a Legendary Writer and Editor.

By Larry L. King. *Public Affairs*. 353 pp. \$26.95

The central mysteries of Larry L. King's engaging, personal, and often moving biography are why Willie Morris threw in the towel at *Harper's* and why he didn't get the second act he deserved. As one of Morris's first hires at *Harper's* and a lifelong friend and boon companion, King—best known for coauthoring the musical *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*—seems amply qualified to unravel these mysteries, but, as he acknowledges, he doesn't altogether succeed. "Why didn't Willie Morris fight back? . . . Why did he exile himself?" asks King. "I have no single conclusion that will please everybody—or even myself." Morris was "wounded," "bereft," and "angry," King notes, before suggesting that clinical depression, intensified by boozing and pill popping, helps explain the long literary denouement.

The psychological explanation is doubtless important, but there are social factors to consider as well. Morris's belletristic vision of "literary America" was wedded to liberal conceptions of good politics and good taste. In *New York Days*, Morris confessed that he didn't run a "watershed" essay on Sino-American relations by a pre-presidential Richard Nixon simply because he "did not want Richard Nixon in *Harper's*." But by the end of the '60s, the tradition to which Morris was loyal was already being eclipsed by fresh understandings of cultural meaning and power. America splintered not just politically but aesthetically too, with new values infusing everything from pop music to partisan politics. It's no accident that the magazines that defined the '70s (*Rolling Stone*), the '80s (*Spy*), and the '90s (*Wired*) were very different from Morris's *Harper's* in tone and focus. King notes that *New York Days*, Morris's last truly serious book, "lacked meaningful candor and tough-minded self-examination." Whatever personal demons were hounding him, Willie Morris must have felt increasingly out of touch with a world in which he was just one more aging wunderkind.

—Nick Gillespie

Herd on an Island

I DON'T HAVE TO TELL YOU that Anne Barclay Priest is an eccentric. All I have to tell you is that for many years she managed a flock of sheep on an island off Nova Scotia while acting in plays in New York City.

In 1971, she buys a Nova Scotia waterfront lot overlooking the hauntingly lovely Blue Island. For shelter, she brings an old house from Massachusetts (paying \$800 to buy it and \$6,000 to move it). When she hears that developers are nosing around the 138-acre Blue Island, she buys it to protect her view. (Modest inheritances, she says, pay for all this.) And once she owns the island, she decides to put sheep on it. This isn't uncommon; many local islands support livestock. I once saw bison grazing quietly on an island in Blue Hill Bay, Maine, beyond the seals and porpoises.

Priest loves the region, the people, and the adventure. She becomes close friends with some of her neighbors, but not all. When she puts range cattle on the island, to clear brush before bringing in the sheep, a fisherman plants himself on her mainland property one afternoon and informs her, "Sheep are okay. Lots of people keep sheep on islands. But not critters."

Priest pays no attention. Later, she asks another neighbor, "Do you think people would criticize me if I put pigs out on Blue Island?"

"Anne. People would criticize you if you put

TRAFFICKING IN SHEEP:

A Memoir—From Off-Broadway, New York, to Blue Island, Nova Scotia.

By Anne Barclay Priest.
Countryman.
253 pp. \$19.95



A few of Anne Barclay Priest's sheep graze on Blue Island.

angels out there!”

Priest gives up on pigs and goes straight to sheep, buying her first flock of hardy Scottish blackfaces from a transplanted English sheep breeder who once worked for James Herriot. She gets a Border collie to help control her herd, and learns the immensely sophisticated, demanding, and rewarding pleasures offered by one of the world's great dog breeds.

Priest also learns that you don't just drop sheep on an island and leave them. Shearing, vaccinating, breeding, and culling all require trips in small craft and uncertain weather to deal with stubborn and uncooperative creatures. The tasks also require help from the community: the fishermen, carpenters, contractors, and others who own the boats, block and tackle, trucks, telephones, and everything else she finds that she needs. Despite some initial doubts, most everyone lends a hand.

In the years that follow, Priest buys another sheep farm in upstate New York, where she and the lambs spend winters. She increases her flock and watches it prosper—a favorite sheep, Mischa, races about the pasture, making beautiful balletic leaps. She buys a guard donkey to protect the sheep in New York from dogs, puts goats on the island in Nova Scotia, branches out into another sheep breed, and attends a sheep-herders' peace mission in Israel.

A foreign correspondent before becoming an actress, Priest has a voice that's energetic and opinionated, funny and beguiling. “Despite my being an oddity, I had the silent support of the men at the wharf,” she writes at one point. “They were always ready to help whenever I needed a hand, . . . but no one ever made me feel that I didn't belong there. I also know that I gave considerable pleasure all around when I fell into the water, which I did about once a year.” She is firmly connected to the natural world and takes a great deal of joy in inhabiting it. And she makes us wonder why we're eccentrically here, instead of running sheep on an island—which is clearly so much fun.

—Roxana Robinson

CONTEMPORARY AFFAIRS

Morocco's Moderation

MIDDLE EAST ANALYSTS often cite Morocco as a country with at least reasonable potential to become a democracy. A nation with a history of relatively moderate politics,

Morocco has 33 million people, nearly all of them Muslim, who value education and independence in equal measure. Though Morocco remains a monarchy, its citizens now elect local officials as well as representatives to a parliament, and its recent kings, whatever their failings, haven't been tyrants.

A *New York Times* and BBC correspondent since the 1950s, Marvine Howe observed firsthand the end of the French protectorate in 1956 and the evolution of Moroccan independence in the decades thereafter. She offers a broad-stroke summary of Morocco's past, coupled with the captivating and clearheaded reportorial detail necessary for assessing its future. And she has spoken firsthand to many of the figures who have shaped the past and will have a hand in the future: Mehdi Ben Barka, the opposition leader who was murdered in 1965, seemingly for political reasons; the young prince Moulay Hassan, who went on to reign from 1962 to 1999 as Hassan II; and leading human rights activists.

Howe characterizes the rule of Hassan II as a “prolonged despotic regime,” which seems an overstatement. To be sure, Hassan was a master of playing parties against one another, and he jailed political opponents, though rarely for long. After his death, his son and successor, Mohammad VI, appointed a truth and reconciliation commission, which has granted amnesty to thousands of former prisoners, though without any direct criticism of the monarchy. Yet despite his occasional severity, Hassan generally allowed quite open political discussion at the local level, a tradition that

MOROCCO:
The Islamist
Awakening and
Other Challenges.

By Marvine Howe.
Oxford Univ. Press.
448 pp. \$29.95

continues under his son. Political parties are free to vie for an electoral role so long as they don't oppose the monarchy—which makes for authoritarianism of a comparatively mild sort. Howe is especially acute in her assessment of the multiple groups contending for political legitimacy in the name of Islam.

Though she has only limited knowledge of the daily lives of ordinary Moroccans, Howe recognizes the difficulties they face. A fifth of the population lives below the poverty line; half the population is illiterate (schools are cherished but sparse); four million people live in slums; the unemployment rate is 10 percent nationwide and closer to 20 percent in some cities; and the gap between rich and poor continues to widen. At the same time, the policies of the Bush administration give Moroccans repeated opportunities to mount anti-American protests that are often, in actuality, vehicles for critiques of their own system. The king may find his ability to maintain order tested by events such as the Casablanca bombing of 2003, which killed 45 people.

Yet Morocco has significant strengths as well, including a diverse economic base, substantial remittances from Moroccans working abroad, and the harrowing example of Algeria next door, as well as a close-knit society and generally responsive institutions. All of this gives many Moroccans a sense of optimism that can mystify outsiders—but not Howe, who cautiously shares their hope.

As she notes, King Hassan used to say that “Moroccans are not a people of excess.” But he also spoke of Morocco as a lion tethered to him: Sometimes it pulled him, and sometimes he had to jerk the chain and try to lead it. With many Arab states backing away from their modest promises of liberalization, and with many of their citizens more concerned about peace and order than individual liberties, the Moroccan lion and its keeper will continue to lurch onward. But who will be doing the pulling remains uncertain.

—Lawrence Rosen

Beyond Humanitarianism

WITH A FEW NOTABLE EXCEPTIONS—Chester Crocker in the Reagan administration, Herman Cohen under the first President Bush, and Princeton Lyman in the Clinton administration—Africa specialists in the U.S. government take an

almost perverse pride in the idiosyncratic nature of their portfolios. Although poverty, disease, and conflict are hardly strangers to many areas of the globe, only with respect to Africa do these scourges frame American policy. Africa is needy—and nothing else. In his contribution to *Africa-U.S. Relations*, Lyman blames this myopia partly on the news media, which call our attention to Africa only when catastrophe strikes: “drought and famine in Ethiopia, brutal amputations in Sierra Leone, land mines claiming the lives of children in Angola and Mozambique, and racial and ethnic cleansing in Darfur.”

After a natural or human disaster, the United States may pump hundreds of millions of dollars into relief efforts. Many advocates for Africa no doubt derive satisfaction from the fact that their work is driven by humanitarian and moral concerns untainted by geopolitical or economic interests. However, the continent-in-need approach essentially pushes Africa to the bottom of the U.S. foreign-policy agenda, a fact underscored by the scant time and resources that both Democratic and Republican administrations devote to it in comparison with other regions of the world.

Noble as it is, the humanitarian impulse simply doesn't have the sustainability of national interest and other traditional elements of state-

AFRICA-U.S. RELATIONS:
Strategic Encounters.

Edited by Donald Rothchild and Edmond J. Keller. Lynne Rienner. 299 pp. \$55

The continent-in-need approach of relief advocates essentially pushes Africa to the bottom of the U.S. foreign-policy agenda.

craft. Consequently, the American government has made few long-term investments in Africa, especially post-Cold War, now that there's no danger of dominoes falling to the Soviets. Further, the trauma of American casualties during the 1992-94 humanitarian mission to Somalia—especially the deaths of 18 soldiers during the episode made famous by Mark Bowden's *Black Hawk Down* (1999) and its movie adaptation—eliminated any possibility that the Clinton administration would move beyond the usual neglect. Campaigning to succeed Clinton, George W. Bush went so far as to declare Africa strategically insignificant to the United States.

However, several factors have shifted the geostrategic calculus since Bush took office: growing hydrocarbon production in West Africa, the availability of ports and airfields along the littoral of East Africa, and, post-9/11, concern about transnational terrorist networks penetrating southward from North Africa. In this book, Donald Rothchild and Edmond J. Keller, political scientists at, respectively, the University of California, Davis, and the University of California, Los Angeles, bring together American and African scholars to consider a new model for American relations with Africa. Essays in the book focus on security issues, such as terrorism and ethnic conflict; social problems, such as HIV/AIDS and the environment; and economic troubles, such as trade policy and debt. While many of the authors continue to regard the continent as an object of humanitarian and moral solicitude—as does President Bush on some issues, most notably HIV/AIDS—they also recognize the connection between America's strategic concerns and Africa's needs in terms of human security. As Keller writes, "The United States has a vital interest in strengthening the military and intelligence capacities of poor countries like the ones we find in Africa. For their part, African countries could measurably improve their ability to solve problems of peace and security with the aid of the United States." Such efforts are already under way. Since 2002, for example, the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa has

worked with the governments of Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen to keep the peace and enhance security.

To be sure, many experts still see pursuing self-interest and alleviating suffering as mutually exclusive, and their linkage as ethically suspect or, at the very least, unrealistic. Even some of the authors here come across as hesitant in their efforts to balance mundane national interests (both African and American) with more idealistic visions of humanitarianism. Change will be gradual, but solid works like this one may hasten it.

—J. Peter Pham

HISTORY

Champion of Liberalism

THE PASSING OF RICHARD Hofstadter, felled by leukemia at 54, was a sad loss for American scholarship. His masterly studies of American political thinking—including *The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It* (1948), *The Age of Reform* (1955), and *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (1963)—constitute an enduring legacy, as does the work of the talented and prolific successors he trained at Columbia University, such as Robert Dallek, Lawrence W. Levine, and the late Christopher Lasch. All the more tragic, then, that when he died, Hofstadter had barely begun what was to be his masterwork, a three-volume history of America's political culture from 1750 onward.

Hofstadter (1916-70) made his reputation in the 1950s by attacking the Progressive historians, notably Frederick Jackson Turner, Charles Beard, and Vernon Parrington, for imagining an America riven by class conflict. Shocked by the emergence of the "radical right," he exposed its hyperpatriotism as a populist expression of "status anxiety." Ironically, though, he found his work under attack from the New Left in the late 1960s. Younger historians, drawn to the neglected

RICHARD HOFSTADTER:
An Intellectual
Biography.

By David S. Brown. Univ.
of Chicago Press.
291 pp. \$27.50

underside of the American experience, repudiated his “consensus history” and disdained as grandiose apologetics the sort of gracefully written synoptic narratives he composed. Buffeted from both extremes of the political spectrum, and appalled by radical assaults on universities, Hofstadter clung to his faith in America’s liberal values but anguished over the rising generation’s apparent disdain for them.

In this splendid account, David S. Brown, a historian at Elizabethtown College in Pennsylvania, shows that Hofstadter’s own past shaped his understanding of the American past. An eastern urbanite, he was leery of agrarian parochialism. The son of a Jewish father and a Protestant mother, he felt himself both outsider and insider. As a student during the Great Depression, he was drawn to Marxism and even joined the Columbia unit of the Communist Party in 1939, leaving it after only four months, disillusioned by Stalin’s purge trials. He came to believe that the best features of the American experience were its liberalism, pluralism, and inclusiveness; the worst, its anti-intellectualism, penchant for vigilante violence, and confusion of patriotism with conformism—in the phrase he coined, its “paranoid style.”

Though Brown shows admirable insight and sure-footedness in linking Hofstadter’s personality and values to his work, he does less than full justice to his subject’s central ideas. He would have done well to take more seriously the contention of Hofstadter and the influential political scientist Louis Hartz (who is neglected here) that, from the outset, American political discourse has been framed by a mythic and sometimes stultifying belief in what Hofstadter called *laissez-faire individualism* and Hartz termed “irrational Lockianism.” That thesis goes a long way toward explaining why socialism made scarcely a dent on the national consensus and why today the United States has the highest degree of income inequality among the world’s richest nations.

Clearly, there is much in Hofstadter’s understanding of this country still worth pondering.

Consider this observation in his half-century-old *The Age of Reform*: “War has always been the Nemesis of the liberal tradition in America. From our earliest history as a nation there has been a curiously persistent association between democratic politics and nationalism, jingoism, or war.”

—Sanford Lakoff

Commission the Truth

PRESIDENTS FREQUENTLY resort to blue-ribbon commissions to help them find a way through, or at least temporary shelter from, political storms. High-level commissions took on the Pearl Harbor and 9/11 surprise attacks, President

John F. Kennedy’s assassination, and any number of lesser crises, such as the Iran-contra scandal during President Ronald Reagan’s second term. Their reputation is decidedly mixed. More than four decades after JFK’s murder, for example, the Warren Commission’s report remains the object of widespread ridicule. Yet such panels continue to appeal to presidents. Kenneth Kitts, an associate provost and political science professor at South Carolina’s Francis Marion University, sets out to explain why.

He focuses on five panels, all concerned with

PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSIONS & NATIONAL SECURITY:
The Politics of Damage Control.

By Kenneth Kitts. Lynne Rienner. 194 pp. \$49.95



The Roberts Commission on Pearl Harbor was cited as a precedent by many who pushed for creation of a 9/11 commission. They overlooked the fact that the earlier investigation, headed by Supreme Court Justice Owen J. Roberts (in dark suit), was seen as flawed.

national security: the Roberts Commission on Pearl Harbor (1941–42); the Rockefeller Commission on the CIA's domestic activities (1975); the Scowcroft Commission on MX missile deployment (1983); the Tower Commission on Iran-contra (1986–87); and the 9/11 Commission (2002–04). Four of the five (the exception being the Scowcroft Commission) came into being in response to catastrophes or apparent scandals, and were ostensibly established to uncover what happened, who was to blame, and how recurrences might be avoided.

Kitts makes a solid attempt to draw back the curtain of mystery behind which these commissions typically operate.

In appointing commissions, presidents tend to be concerned more with protecting their own interests than with ferreting out the facts.

He rightly emphasizes the paramount importance of who is selected to serve on them, and provides many insights into the political intrigue behind the scenes. His sketches of the members of the

Roberts Commission investigating Pearl Harbor—four military men and a Supreme Court justice—demonstrate that the panel was congenitally flawed. Major General Frank McCoy, for example, was compromised by his friendship with Secretary of War Henry Stimson; and the panel's chairman, Justice Owen Roberts, was notable for an almost childlike naiveté.

Some of Kitts's omissions are curious, though. For example, he notes that the Tower Commission on Iran-contra portrayed President Reagan as confused and out of the loop, a president who had allowed National Security Council aides to run amok and cross-wire two covert operations (arms to Tehran in exchange for American hostages and cash, with the cash then diverted to the Nicaraguan contras). By contrast, two separate investigations, one by a joint congressional committee and another by independent counsel Lawrence Walsh, found that Reagan, in Kitts's words, "had actively presided over an illegal and politically unsound policy." Kitts seems inclined

toward the latter explanation, though he brings no new information to bear either way. Could President Reagan's Alzheimer's disease, unrecognized at the time, help account for the disparate accounts? Kitts doesn't even mention the possibility.

The outlier here is the Scowcroft Commission, which came into being because President Reagan wanted blue-ribbon sanction for his plan to deploy a new land-based missile. Though commissions are frequently convened to legitimize precooked decisions, Kitts would have been wise to dispense with this one and devote more of his relatively short book to mining the history of the other, more controversial panels.

Kitts concludes that in appointing these commissions, presidents tend to be concerned more with protecting their own interests than with ferreting out the facts. At the very least, commissions buy time until their reports come out and establish one axis for debate. That's true enough, though congressional investigations—which Kitts generally takes at face value—are no less tainted by self-interest and political agendas. Still, and despite its limitations, *Presidential Commissions & National Security* succeeds in turning a spotlight on a phenomenon that deserves scrutiny: the efforts of temporary panels, their life spans measured in months, to investigate the permanent government and its failings.

—Max Holland

Soldiers Who Made France

THE REMARKABLE FEATURE of French history in the last 30 years is that it has ceased to hinge upon soldiers.

French politics in the first two-thirds of the 20th century were very largely defined by Captain Alfred Dreyfus, Marshal Henri Pétain, and General Charles de Gaulle, and the intense loyalties and hostility they variously inspired. The importance of these three soldiers reflected the extraor-

FRANCE AND THE FRENCH:
A Modern History.

By Rod Kedward.
Overlook. 741 pp. \$35

dinary role that the French army, known as the school of the nation, played in the popular imagination and political life. Conscription meant that the army became the great shared experience of Frenchmen, the institution in which Bretons and Provençals and Parisians learned a common language and culture.

The false accusations of espionage against Dreyfus starting in 1894 were only on the most visible level about injustice and anti-Semitism. The Dreyfus case also represented another outbreak of the argument that had divided France since the Revolution of 1789. Was the army the custodian of the nation, timeless and Roman Catholic and resting atop a deep monarchical tradition, or of the Republic, secular and modern and democratic? Soon after Dreyfus was cleared of all charges in 1906 came the Republic's revenge. The ministry of war began keeping secret dossiers on each officer's religious beliefs and practices. A Mass-going officer would find his promotions blocked, whereas a staunch and anti-clerical republican could rise through the ranks.



After World War II, Charles de Gaulle (1890–1970) carefully stoked the myth of a widespread French Resistance to the Nazi occupation, with himself as *de facto* leader.

Purged and divided, this political punching bag of an army then faced the industrialized slaughter of World War I, in which Pétain made his name defending Verdun. The troops held on, just. But even America's entry into the war in April 1917 could not avert the sullen mutinies of that summer by an exhausted army that could no longer sustain the monstrous losses of doomed attacks, and Pétain again saved France and her army, this time by suspending offensives for the rest of the year and allowing morale to recover. The consequent status of national hero brought him out of retirement when the Germans returned in 1940—but after France's defeat, Pétain became the figurehead of the puppet Vichy regime, a role that proved curiously congenial to the deeply conservative old man. He relished the Vichy slogan “Family, Country, Work,” chosen in deliberate opposition to the “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity” of the Republic.

So, having saved France in 1917, Pétain betrayed her in 1940—this was the first of the myths established by France's next essential soldier, de Gaulle. Like his myth of a widespread and self-generated Resistance, it was only partly true. The old division between a France for and against the Revolution, for and against Dreyfus, revived under Pétain. At least until late 1943, when the Nazis began losing the war, the Vichy regime was rather more popular, and the Resistance very much more marginal (and very much more dependent on British arms and inspiration) than de Gaulle later insisted.

In peacetime, de Gaulle saved a kind of democracy by becoming a kind of dictator. He sought to reconcile those deep French divisions by inventing a new constitution for his Fifth Republic, one that combined republican form and monarchical powers. He preferred plebiscites to elections and abjured political parties. And, aside from the dreadful Algerian War, he was lucky. His presidency, lasting from 1958 to 1969, overlapped with *les trente glorieuses*, 30 years of economic growth. His successors have labored instead under *les trente piteuses*, 30 years of relative stagnation.

Rod Kedward is a leading historian of the Resistance, and his book comes trailing almost worshipful reviews in Britain. A skillful chronicler of Dreyfus, Pétain, and de Gaulle, he is also marvelous on social change and intellectual life. He is splendid, too, on the selective and delayed French memory, and the ways that the collaborations of Vichy and the torture of Algeria have recently returned to haunt a chastened France. He presents a France torn and yet also defined by competing identities and differing narratives and realms of memory, an approach that leans on historian Pierre Nora's celebrated divisions among the traditions of the Republic, the Nation, and *les France*, the last an almost untranslatable notion of a single France composed of many different elements.

Kedward concludes that "the identity sought by France within Europe had long become inseparable from attitudes to the global market economy," which is to say that one way or another, France's future as a nation is increasingly being subordinated to the grander narratives of Europe and of globalization. But at least the soldiers finally seem to have faded from the picture, and President Jacques Chirac's recent decision to end conscription is taking the army from the central role in national life that it has enjoyed and endured since Napoleon.

—Martin Walker

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

Seeing God's Hand in Evolution

THE MOST DANGEROUS place to be on any battlefield is smack in the middle, between the opposing forces. So one can only imagine the scorn likely to be heaped on this mild and eloquent book as it seeks to appeal to both sides in a war that seems endless. Francis S. Collins is a noted genetic scientist who chaired the Human Genome Project, and a self-described evangelical

Christian. His topic here is evolution, and he wants to reach out not only to the scientists who, as he does, embrace and study it, but also to the evangelicals who spurn it. If both sides dismiss him as insufficiently doctrinaire—he rebukes atheists as illogical while imploring his fellow Christians to reconsider their antievolution orthodoxies—then both will be the poorer for it.

Collins is hardly the only scientist with religious convictions. As he notes, some 40 percent of biologists, physicists, and mathematicians say that they believe "in a God who actively communicates with humankind and to whom one may pray in expectation of receiving an answer," a proportion that hasn't changed significantly over the years. But Collins is one of the few such scientists who habitually and publicly use the language of faith in talking about science. Appearing alongside President Clinton in 2000 to announce the first complete draft of the human genome—the DNA sequence in each of our cells that holds the building blocks of life—Collins took the podium to remark that he was awed to catch "the first glimpse of our own instruction book, previously known only to God." And he's one of the few in this polarized debate with the nerve to point to the elegance of the evolutionary mechanism, and the splendor of its results, as evidence of God's hand in the world.

This book does more than just review the voluminous evidence for evolution, though the author's intimate acquaintance with the genome makes him ideally situated to do so. Collins's aims are broader, more ambassadorial. Seeking to give nonreligious readers some sense of the religious mindset, he offers a narrative of his own conversion in young adulthood, quoting at length from the writings of C. S. Lewis and St. Augustine that influenced him. He challenges his fellow Christians to see the dangers posed to faith both by young earth creationism (the doctrine that all life was created in its current form several thousand years ago) and by intelligent design, which he calls a "God of the gaps" theology—one that's dependent for reverence on the puzzles in nature that we do not yet understand. And he

THE LANGUAGE OF GOD:

A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief.

By Francis S. Collins.
Free Press. 304 pp. \$26

demonstrates that those puzzles aren't necessarily insoluble. For instance, intelligent design adherents often describe the mammalian eye and the bacterial flagellum as so "irreducibly complex" that they couldn't have resulted from evolution, but Collins offers clear and accessible explanations of how step-by-step evolution could indeed produce such structures.

To Collins, evolution and faith are altogether compatible—indeed, each lends depth to the other. Why, he asks, would studying the laws of nature and the intricate mechanisms of the universe do anything but increase one's wonder at creation? "Many believers in God have been drawn to young earth creationism because they see scientific advances as threatening to God. But does He really need defending here? Is not God the author of the laws of the universe? Is He not the greatest scientist? . . . Most important, is He honored or dishonored by those who would demand that His people ignore rigorous scientific conclusions about His creation?"

This approach, known as "theistic evolution," probably predominates among scientists of faith. Collins suggests, with sweet ingenuousness, that it might attract broader support if it had a catch-

ier name. He proposes "BioLogos," from the Greek *bios* (life) and *logos* (the word of God). Alas, this sounds less like a theology than a macrobiotic cereal. But never mind. The book itself has a credible shot at spreading the word about the little-appreciated middle ground—at least, that is, for those who have ears to hear.

—Amy E. Schwartz

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Spectral Mathematics

MOST OF US CAN HANDLE A little arithmetic. We can tot up grocery receipts, buy enough cookies for a children's birthday party, or estimate how much gas we'll need to reach our destination. Numbers that represent familiar things—dol-

lars, cookies, gallons of fuel—generally don't induce mental panic. But once we begin to think of those numbers as entities in their own right, obeying an abstract system of rules, we leave mere arithmetic behind and enter the realm of

UNKNOWN QUANTITY:
A Real and Imaginary History of Algebra.

By John Derbyshire.
Joseph Henry Press.
374 pp. \$27.95

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mathematics. And that, for many people, is where puzzlement, if not outright phobia, sets in.

John Derbyshire, author of the elegant *Prime Obsession: Bernhard Riemann and the Greatest Unsolved Problem in Mathematics* (2003), attempts here to render non-threatening the large branch of mathematics known as algebra. Algebra began with number problems our ancestors must have dealt with. How do you allot grain fairly among families of different sizes? If one sheep's worth of wool makes a rug of a certain size, how many sheep do you need for a rug twice as long and wide? Early on, there must have been people of a mathematical bent for whom working out number puzzles was an attraction in itself. A cuneiform tablet from the Babylonians records the solution, awkwardly expressed in words, of what we would now call a quadratic equation. But lack of a handy notation hampered progress for millennia. Not until the 17th century did the familiar x 's and y 's become commonplace, and that's when algebra took off.

At first, letters stood plainly for numbers, so an algebraist could solve a problem in a general way, then answer a specific question by plugging in actual values. But true mathematicians deemed the last step uninteresting. It was the manipulation of symbols according to logical rules that caught their fancy, not the real-world applications. Soon, they realized that they could denote a certain operation—a swapping of coefficients in a cubic equation, say—by a symbol, then explore the algebraic properties and rules governing that symbol. Repeat, ad infinitum. Algebra, in this generalized sense, concerns logical relationships among abstract entities whose definitions in terms of simple numbers have been left far behind. We are in the world of fields and groups, rings and manifolds, homology and homotopy—and a strange, self-referential, infinitely fertile world it is.

Derbyshire has a witty, almost brusque way with words. He offers pithy anecdotes, sardonic asides, and sharp-eyed vignettes of his protagonists. Admirably, he doesn't talk down to readers but leads them on with breezy confidence. One

imagines a hearty, no-nonsense schoolmaster marching his pupils across the moors in a howling rainstorm, turning back occasionally to say, Come along now, it's just a bit of water, it won't hurt you!

There's no escaping the reality, however, that this is a book about algebra. Readers will be able to judge the depth of their fascination by marking the page number at which they begin to fall behind. I made it about two-thirds of the way through, but then I was trained merely as a theoretical physicist. As the concepts become more abstruse, the operations more convoluted, an urgent question presses: What's it all for?

Perhaps Derbyshire would regard the question as crass. To the mathematician, juggling esoteric concepts and searching out their abstract relationships needs no justification beyond the pure intellectual pleasure it affords. But for the rest of us, the journey becomes a bit of a slog. Derbyshire has written a charming, demanding book, but even he can't bridge the unbridgeable. Mathematics—like golf or opera—offers endless delight to some, but brings others, sooner or later, to a state of baffled exasperation.

—David Lindley

Better Living Through Neurochemistry?

IN THE RELATIVELY NEAR future, brain science may produce all sorts of technological breakthroughs: brain scans that determine whether someone is telling the truth; tests that uncover secret urges or latent tendencies, such as a penchant for violence; pills

and other treatments to erase traumatic memories or reduce the misery they cause, as well as treatments to strengthen one's memory skills; and procedures to treat and even cure blindness, quadriplegia, epilepsy, and Parkinson's disease.

Some of the near-miraculous possibilities raise daunting questions. Should a "truth-detect-

**HARD SCIENCE,
HARD CHOICES:**
Facts, Ethics,
and Policies
Guiding Brain
Science Today.

By Sandra J. Ackerman.
Dana Press.
152 pp. \$12.95

tor,” even if it’s flawlessly accurate, be allowed in trials, job interviews, contract negotiations, family therapy? Can we prevent memory pills and the like from creating social divisions between users and nonusers, divisions likely to reflect, at least in part, wealth? Should brain sensors be used in nonmedical settings—such as offices, where they might help people communicate more efficiently with computers? Such are the questions that the nascent field of “neuroethics” aims to address.

In *Hard Science, Hard Choices*, based on a conference held in May 2005 at the Library of Congress, Sandra J. Ackerman reviews the expert opinions on these topics. Sections of the book are devoted to brain scans, brain-computer interfaces, and drugs. Throughout, she stresses two inter-related questions: What *can* we do? And what *should* we do?

Many of the technological advances offer the possibility not just of curing the ill but of improving the healthy—of making people, in the oft-heard phrase, better than well. Drugs such as Prozac and Ritalin are already being used in this way, and future medicines and implantable devices will provide more extensive possibilities. The participants are divided about the moral, political, and social challenges. Stanford Law pro-

fessor Hank Greely, for example, sees no problems with enhancement per se: “I’m a teacher; enhancement is my business.” By contrast, neurologist Anjan Chatterjee describes a disturbing scenario in which a businessman pops amphetamines to master Arabic (research on stroke victims indicates that the drugs may help people learn), while his school-aged son takes Viagra before competing in races (as Ackerman notes, it helps the lungs work more efficiently, “among other effects”). So who’s right? You won’t find conclusive answers here—the field is too new and the science too rapidly changing for that.

Ackerman’s account can be disjointed and superficial. For example, she declares without elaboration that “we can never really know whether anyone else is conscious.” (I don’t know that my wife is conscious?) Such slips may reflect the project’s genesis as a summary of oral presentations, as well as Ackerman’s presumed emphasis on trying—mostly with success—to translate medical jargon into lay terms. Though occasionally frustrating, her book provides a speedy and engaging introduction to the scientific and moral issues, as well as a chance to eavesdrop on the beginnings of a debate that’s likely to continue for decades.

—Peter Schwartz

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PORTRAIT



Cadet George Armstrong Custer, ca. 1859

Young Man Going West

Before General George Armstrong Custer (1839–76) became the mustachioed icon with the jaunty wide-brimmed hat, he was a lackluster young West Point cadet. After the Civil War he turned Indian campaigner, and on June 25, 1876, without waiting for reinforcements, he led the Seventh Cavalry against a large force of Lakota and Cheyenne by the Little Bighorn River in Montana. He and all his men were killed in the battle, which became known as “Custer’s Last Stand” and won him a spot in

American history and lore. Movies, books, and songs about him, and some 1,000 pictures depicting the fight, have made Custer one of the handful of figures from the Old West whom Americans can still identify by sight, remarks Larry McMurry in *Oh What a Slaughter* (2005). This ambrotype, for which Custer probably sat in 1859 while on leave from West Point, is displayed at the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C., which reopened July 1 following six years of renovations.



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